AARON'S BREASTPLATE

J. RENDEL HARRIS

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III

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AND

OTHER ADDRESSES

BY

J. RENDEL HARRIS

LONDON: NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCHES. THOMAS LAW, MEMORIAL HALL, E.C.

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PREFACE

THIS little book contains some addresses recently given at Free Church meetings during the year in which I have had the honour and happiness of presiding over the Federation of the Free Churches of England and Wales. I am afraid there is not much contentious theological matter here for those who love the noise of battle and the clash of arms; and party politics find also no space or scope. Those who look for either of these in a collection of Free Church addresses must necessarily be disappointed: we are limited by our organisation to the pursuit of love and holiness and such things whereby we may edify one another. Excuse must also be asked for the disconnected character of the subjects chosen. They have been given at various times and places, and are printed in response to numerous appeals;

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but if they are not bound together by any controlling thought, they may serve to give an idea of the teaching and testimony in our united public meetings, as well as at some denominational gatherings, and last, but not least, amongst my friends in the Settlement at Woodbrooke.

RENDEL HARRIS.

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AARON'S BREASTPLATE

CHAPTER I

AARON'S BREASTPLATE

IN the 28th chapter of Exodus we have what may be called the Ornaments Rubric of the congregation of Israel, an inventory of the externals of the priesthood, with minute directions as to what colours and fabrics were to be employed and the occasions on which the holy vestments were to be worn. There are people who devote themselves to the study of Aaron's wardrobe (as Milton calls it, when he speaks of the Roman and Romanising clergy as decked out from "Aaron's wardrobe or the flamen's vestry," though, as a matter of fact, I believe the vestments of which Milton speaks are only the ordinary fashions of popular dress

in early Christian centuries) : and those who thus devote themselves do so, either with a view of imitating those early dresses, and wearing them on the state occasions of their religion, thus becoming nearer to God by the art of being farther from men, or else that they may extract mystical exegesis out of the biblical accounts, and prove the nature of the redeemed soul out of the interpretation of coats and colours and of the bells and pomegranates that are upon the vesture's hem.

Now, I am not one of those who extract much comfort or distil spiritual medicine out of these ancient Levitical accounts ; my rule in such matters is Mrs. Browning's :—

"People come up higher : Aaron's tribe is dispossest."

There is really very little to be got out of the sanctuary and its services, over and above what has already been extracted by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that will repay the time required to understand them ; and practically the only two things that I have yet

carried off as legitimate Christian spoil from my raiding of these accounts are (1) the high-priestly benediction, (2) the high-priestly breastplate. Of these the former is well known to be the benediction in use in the Second Temple. Whether it was in use earlier is uncertain. It is sufficient and significant that it has been in use ever since, so that some one must have struck oil somewhere, and somewhen, in a spiritual sense. You recognise it as soon as I repeat it; it has often been, in detached fragments at least, a part of your own speech and prayer:—

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee;
"The Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee;
"The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace."

There is nothing antiquated about that, nor any suspicion that it is, or will be, out of date. When it was first uttered matters little as long as we are sure that it will continue, and that we make a diligent use of it in the

present. The second Aaronic feature to which I propose to devote attention is the breastplate of precious stones, which we find described from the standpoint of the lapidary and jeweller, and from the point of view of the liturgiologist—an account of how it was to be made, and how and when it was to be worn. I am not sure whether there are not two accounts of Aaron's jewellery, for we find in the same connection a description of the making of two inscribed plates or laminæ, of onyx stone according to the popular rendering, but more likely of jade stone, on which were inscribed, six by six, the names of the tribes. The two plates thus designed were attached to his shoulder-gear, and if you like to put it popularly, he carried the people on his back in a sacramental sense. It looks as if this were of the nature of a duplicate of the other account about the placing of twelve stones in a sacred breastplate. Whether it is so is a question for critics, and I don't even spend the time to inquire. For as the breastplate is so much the more beautiful symbol

than the plate of onyx or jade, I stick to that. It has not only the advantage of being more beautiful, but the involved suggestion of spiritual intercession is more clearly brought out, and this in two ways : first, by the greater individuality of the tribes, to each of which a precious stone is attached, and second, by the fact that the holy adornment is worn on the heart and not on the shoulders. The importance of these distinctions is obvious. When we are speaking of intercession we are talking, in a disguised way, of love for souls, and that is not a matter that can be dealt with *en bloc*. Even the tribe has to be disintegrated, and the beauty of souls comes out, on the Lord's side as well as on ours, and even with lost souls, by learning them and loving them, one by one. And as to the difference between the shoulders and the heart, while there are points of view where it means the same thing, as when we equate the sentences—

"He shall carry the lambs in His bosom,"

and

"He layeth it on His shoulders rejoicing," there are other considerations, according to which the carrying of people does not necessarily mean the loving them, or, if it does mean it, it means it by an inadequate symbolism.

So we elect for the breastplate, and leave the onyx stones or jade stones alone.

Now, when we consider the High Priest of the ancient confession, we may say of his liturgical ornament that the breastplate was a sort of book of remembrance of the people for whom he had to pray. He took them into the place of secret grace and secret glory with him, and when he drew near under the wings of the Shekinah the mysterious light of the sanctuary fell upon his breastplate, and every separate gem began to glow as if it had been a living soul. Thus he stood before the Lord, and began his devotion in the form—

"Behold, I and the children which God has given me."

You will remember, in passing, how obscurely

that passage is introduced as descriptive of Christ in Heb. ii. 14, as follows:

"And again, Behold, I and the children whom God has given me.

"Forasmuch, therefore, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood," &c.

Evidently the writer is working out the thought that the sanctified and the sanctifier are all of one, a truth which is a commonplace in the region of Love, however difficult it may be in the district of dogma; and it is sufficient to say, in this connection, that the appearance of the High Priest in the sanctuary with his breastplate of precious stones is a symbol of the oneness of the sanctified and the Sanctifier. He does not appear without them, nor they without Him.

To put it, therefore, as we have said, in simple speech, this priestly breastplate was a kind of book of remembrance of the people for whom he had to pray; for every stone was an inscribed stone, and the names sprang into light along with the glory of the jewels upon

which they were written. Let us examine the matter a little more in detail.

1. He carried with him the body corporate of Israel : the " whole family," if we may put it so, was there—I mean the whole family as understood in that day. Since then the praying soul has become more imperial ; it has become easier to detect consanguinity in one another. The bounds of our spiritual habitation have been enlarged. Judaism was too short a bed for the Pax Evangelica to stretch itself in. Its tent would not image the sky adequately unless the cords were lengthened, and unless there were a breaking out upon the right hand and upon the left. There must be a " Peace to the far " as well as " Peace to the near."

But, from Aaron's point of view, his prayer was comprehensive. It took in all the people ; it surveyed the length and breadth of Immanuel's land ; it flew from east to west and from the north to the south. Dan to Beersheba was a sacred motion, a pilgrimage of the spirit. He did not leave out the tribe of Dan

because the Antichrist was to come from thence, nor forget little Benjamin because he was little. His prayer for peace and his benediction of peace was in the manner of the Psalmist, "Peace upon Israel"; and St. Paul only bettered it by extending the connotation of Israel, "Peace be upon them and upon the Israel of God."

It is no small grace to have our prayers all right, as far as they go; a defect which is only undue contraction is easily mended. The exhortation that prayers be made for all men is only a corollary to the doctrine and duty of love to all men. "Thou shalt pray for thy neighbour as thyself," says the Spirit.

2. The High Priest carried the names of the tribes upon his heart. Amongst them, not inconspicuous nor forgotten, was *the tribe to which he himself belonged.* The Book of Family Prayer was bound up in the volume of the Common Prayer. We must stay at home as well as go to church. The Aaronic priesthood says, "My people shall be thy people." I am

inclined to think the Book of Family Prayer occupies the first place, and there are intimations in the New Testament that certain forms of appeal in this part of the book have a spiritual right of way.

Here is a bit out of an old family Prayer Book :—

"Lord, I beseech Thee to have mercy upon my son, for he is horribly bedevilled."

And here is another :—

"My little daughter is even now at the point of death ; come and lay Thy hand on her and she shall live."

"My mother-in-law is sick of a fever."

And what shall we say of the woman who, when she could not successfully cry out and pray as a mother, attained her end by barking like a dog :—

"Truth ! Lord : children's crumbs will do for us, or whatever falls from Thy spread table."

Abraham's greatness was not merely in his believing God, and having it counted to him

for righteousness, but in the fact that he claimed something more than the promise. The Lord hung round his neck a precious promise, an elect promise. It was engraven with the art of the jeweller in words to shine through the ages, "Blessed be Isaac." "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." And the man was not satisfied with his gift. He began to suggest that another stone might be given him as a pendant to his chief ornament. "Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!" said he. It was an enlarged edition of the Prayer Book, but no doubt there was a blank page left for it in the Book of the Covenant, for it is written, "Concerning Ishmael also I have heard thee."

3. Under the same head of tribal and family intercessions we must group his prayers for himself, for how could he invoke a blessing on Levi, and be himself outside the blessing of Levi?

And it was not in any secondary sense that these prayers were offered. The Epistle

to the Hebrews suggests that they were first-rank prayers. "He offered up sacrifice, *first for himself*, and then for the errors of the people." We are to lift up hands of prayer, "both for *ourselves* and those who call *us* friend," or relative or tribesman, as the case may be. It is not ridiculous that a man should lie upon his own heart. Peter was upon his own heart when he cried, "Lord, save me." And the poor woman in the Gospel prayed for herself and her daughter in quite a confusing way: "Lord," she said, "have mercy upon me, my daughter," &c. And when she is repelled she cries out, "Lord, help me." Is that tribal praying, or does it not rather mean that she presented her own soul intercessionally with her daughter's? But whether the daughter is the pendant to the mother or the mother to the daughter, I will not venture to decide.

I have drawn attention to this point of view, not so much because people need special encouragement to pray for themselves, but because

some neglect their families and some themselves. So I shall say that we are stones in our own breastplates.

As we are instructed in the Epistle to the Hebrews to consider the great High Priest of our confession—and indeed the writer will never consider the elder priesthood except in the light of the newer and greater office—we may ask the question whether Jesus wore a breastplate of the Aaronic model, or similar to it.

There are some things in the New Testament which suggest that the twelve tribes of Israel were replaced by the twelve Apostles of the Lamb in the early tradition. You remember, for example, how the writer of the Apocalypse has imitated the stones of the breastplate in the foundations of the city, and how he says these foundations are the apostolic men, no more and no less! And there is no doubt of the nearness to Christ of those whom He had specially chosen to be with Him. But then we must not press this numerically, for two reasons: first,

because if we emphasise the grouping of men around the Lord too closely, we shall find an inner circle of three or four within the twelve ; and second, because we shall find an outer circle beyond the twelve, betrayed sometimes by a stray expression like " Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus " (which makes a fresh row of beautiful stones on the breastplate with a pearl in the middle, a turquoise on the left, and a crystal on the right). And sometimes the disclosure is made of an infinitely wider constituency of love and service, as when the Master says, " Neither pray I for these alone, but for all them that shall believe through their word." We may say of Christ's intercession that it was a capacious breastplate upon a universal heart. The length and breadth of the Lord is not measured on the same scale as the length and breadth of Aaron !

You can see Him clothing Himself with this breastplate along with the other high-priestly vestments ; you can see Him studying each individual stone. This one will fall out and

be broken, but "I have prayed for thee, Simon"; and this one will fall out and be lost altogether, being a Son of Loss, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, whatever that may mean.

Every stone in this plate was regarded by Jesus as a gift from the Father. You have, no doubt, noticed how often that thought recurs in John xvii., and in how many lights the breastplate sparkles :—

"Those whom Thou hast given Me, I give them eternal life."

"They were Thine and Thou gavest them Me."

"I pray for those whom Thou gavest Me, they are Thine."

And :—

"Keep in Thy Name those whom Thou gavest Me."

"I kept those whom Thou gavest Me, and watched them, and none of them is lost except . . ."

"I will that those whom Thou gavest Me, be with Me."

Surely it is right to say that Jesus regarded each separate stone, and the whole breastplate of them, as the Father's gift to Him. As such He received them, and as such He remembers them; or, as the writer to the Hebrews says, "He ever liveth to intercede for them."

Now, it will easily be seen that this wearing of a priestly breastplate passes over into an experience of the individual believer.

If, for example, you watch St. Paul at his work, and in his apostolic office, you will find that he is in possession of such an adornment. You can see it in several ways :—

1. He prays for the old nation from which he was sprung : "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved."

2. He prays for the new people, with whom he is in a common citizenship : "For this cause I bow my knees to the Father . . . of whom every family in heaven and earth is named."

3. He prays for individual souls and for groups of souls in whom he is interested. "My God," he says, with the confidence of a great intercessor, "my God shall supply all your need."

4. He prayed for himself, sometimes with close application and threefold repetition, the unanswered prayer betraying by its very mention what a commodity he possessed of answered prayers.

And not only did he pray in this way for himself, but he often turned himself into a prayer stone, and hung himself round the neck of the Church, as though the breastplate were theirs and not his. "Pray for me," he said; "I hope I have a good conscience; I want to live right."[1] We shall succeed, he says in another place, "through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus." "Pray for me, that I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak";

[1] The quotation is from Heb. xiii. 18, and therefore is not to be taken as Paul's direct appeal. Some anonymous person had a breastplate of the same pattern!

my courage is the effluence of your prayers, and so on.

The advantage of the study of these passages is that they help us to understand how thoroughly unsacerdotal the Apostle was, and how little he was disposed to unduly differentiate himself from those whom he served and loved.

And now we must say a word or two briefly about our own breastplates, and the particular intercessions in which our love of souls involves us. It raises in our minds a number of interesting questions, such as the following: How big a breastplate can you wear? How many souls can you carry? Have we as many as twelve that we never forget? Are we sure of one that we always remember? And amongst those whose remembrance is always with us, of how many can we say that we are as sure of being on their breastplates as they are of being on ours?

Questions like these take us into the heart of the mystery of the spiritual commerce between soul and soul, and between souls and God.

It is a great thing to recognise the beauty of the soul, and to have people to pray for who are given us by God. When I look at my own breastplate I take courage and thank God. When my attention is drawn to the grace and sparkle of some special stone that was once uncut and unpolished, then I praise God mightily !

Here is one that I carry about—a shy, changeable, mysterious jewel. What is it? Where did you pick it up? It is an opal ; I picked it up in crossing a certain arid stretch of wilderness, in a solitary place of its own and of mine.

And here is another, akin to it—a pearl. I plunged for it : it was hidden away under the forbidding shells of hostility and misunderstanding. Prayer makes enemies into friends, and final friends, who will not return to the shells from which they have been extracted.

And here is another stone, a sapphire this. It dropped mysteriously out of the sky, with

the blue of the heavens still clinging to it. It lay at my door, to be either trampled on or cherished. It pays sometimes to look down, to condescend to people of low estate!

So one looks from jewel to jewel, from soul to soul, and begins to understand the gift of God to us in one another. May I have this one for my own, wear it, keep it, have it always? How delightful it must be to have people who really belong to us, of whom we may say, in our little measure, what our Lord says on the great scale, they are those whom God has given us, ours and His!

You will remember that Browning brings this meaning out of the similitude of the jewel, as contrasted with the more transient beauty of the flower:—

> "Time may fray the flower-face
> * * * * *
> Jewel from each facet
> Flash thy laugh at Time."

A knowledge of the meaning and scope of intercessional grace will help us to understand

both the beauty of souls and our ownership in them. We must always think nobly of the soul, and we shall only be able to do this as we continue in prayer and abound in the same with thanksgiving.

Here is a little verse from a recently recovered poet of the seventeenth century, named Traherne, which expresses something of the same thought :

"Let's prize their Souls, and let them be our Gems,
Our Temples and our Diadems,
Our Brides, our Friends, our Fellow-Members, Eyes,
Hands, Hearts and Souls, our Victories,
And Spoils and Trophies, our own Joys !
Compared to Souls, all else are Toys.
O Jesus, let them be
Such unto us as they are unto Thee,
Vessels of glory and felicity."

ATARAXIA

CHAPTER II

ATARAXIA

(John xiv.)

WE are to study the Christian privilege which is involved in our Lord's words at the beginning of the 14th chapter of St. John's Gospel, "Let not your heart be troubled," and we are to try to see in what way the injunction or commandment which is there recorded can be translated into practical every-day experience. For I need hardly say that Christ's commandments are all of them practical, if we would take pains to understand them rightly; that they are not arbitrary injunctions, but ethical precepts; and

that, however remote they may sometimes seem to be from the horizon of our ordinary experience, there is associated with the injunction an enabling grace which makes those things possible to us which we should by nature regard as least possible, and therefore least likely to be seriously required.

Now, that it is really the case that in this passage we are not dealing with a mere casual remark, only one degree removed from the sympathetic "don't worry" of a concerned friend, may be seen in various ways: first of all, we may actually detect the virtue which underlies the quoted commandment, as thus: The Greek word used in the Fourth Gospel (*μὴ ταρασσέσθω ἡ καρδία ὑμῶν*) is a verb *ταράσσω*, *i.e.*, *tarassō* (disturb), from which we can at once form a noun, which shall express the state of disturbance (*taraxia*), and then, by prefixing the negative, we make the word *ἀταραξία* (*Ataraxia*), which expresses the undisturbed state; and when we have made the word, we shall find that it is already a recognised virtue among the

Greek philosophers, who knew what Ataraxia was, not merely because they knew Greek, but because they had studied, on one side or another, the very virtue which the word expresses. I propose to keep this word *Ataraxia*, because the English word "undisturbedness" is too long and too clumsy, and not sufficiently musical. If it sounds a little foreign at first, we shall soon be at home with it, and not wish to translate it nor need to explain it. And at present we simply say that underneath Christ's words there was lurking a virtue, with a very musical name, which virtue He had laid up for them that love Him, and which was a part of His own spiritual equipment. We will come back to the study of this virtue after a little while. In the next place, you will notice that the commandment of our Lord is repeated a little lower down, at the end of the 27th verse, where again you find the words, "Do not let your heart be disturbed nor fearful"; and this repetition does more than simply reaffirm the injunction: it verifies what we said

just now about the passage being a musical passage, for here the discourse has moved from what we call in music a keynote, and has returned to it again. And this movement enables us to dissect out the intervening matter, and edit it as a psalm, a psalm of the undisturbed soul—as really a psalm as some of those in the Psalter which address themselves to the various perplexities and distresses of spiritual people who are on the way from trouble to trust and from anxiety to calm. There are keynotes in literary composition, just as there are in music; we expect them especially in psalms, which are hardly removed from musical compositions properly so called. We are not surprised, for instance, to find that the 46th Psalm, which opens so splendidly with—

> "God is our refuge and strength,
> A very present help in time of trouble,"

should end with—

> "The Lord of Hosts is with us;
> The God of Jacob is our refuge";

because the word "refuge" is clearly the key-word to that passage.

In the same way, when we are studying the great consecration psalm of some unknown but deeply-taught person, near the end of the Psalter (I mean the 139th Psalm), even a merely literary person, with small taste for music, can understand the rhythmical motion, which takes us from—

"O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me,"

to—

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my ways."

Or, to take a simpler instance, we might look at the 103rd Psalm, whose opening strain is—

"Bless the Lord, O my soul,"

and watch the way in which the writer (again a musical soul, if any) is working towards his keynote at the end of the psalm, and gathering back the praise of God, from worlds above and worlds around, into the depths of his own experience—

"Bless the Lord, ye His angels,
Bless the Lord, ye His ministers,
Bless the Lord, all His works,
Bless the Lord, O my soul."

So that we need not be surprised to find a musical element, as well as an added emphasis, in the repetition of the commandment "Let not your heart be troubled." Musical! yes, certainly musical, as Christ's own heart was musical, returning from a keynote of its own, such as that in John i. 1, "The Word was with God," and moving through all varieties of resolved discords, until it comes at last to the place where "He ascends up where He was before." Musical! yes, certainly musical, as the life of every true believer is musical which, beginning with a "strange warmth at the heart," does not end with "a strange chill" for its last chapter.

And now let us return to the virtue which we are studying, the virtue of Ataraxia.

From the Greek point of view, it was approached from two directions, and studied in

two very different regards: first, as a description of God, second as the character of the wise man, the truly royal person. The first is the point of view of the Epicureans, the second (modified as *ἀπάθεια*, or, as we say, "apathy") of the Stoics. The first describes Ataraxia as the Peace of God, the second as the Peace of the Soul that follows God. And I think we may see that, when we have stated the matter in that way, we have a point of contact between the Christian seeker after God, and the seekers after God elsewhere. The seeker after God is not to be despised; as Cromwell said, in writing to one of his daughters about a sister of hers, who had joined the sect of the Seekers, "I hear that your sister has joined the Seekers; it is the next best sect to being a Finder." I think it must have been a great trial to Cromwell, who was far removed from fanaticism himself, to have his daughter go astray like that; but the comment he makes shows his greatness: "*next best sect to being a Finder!*" That is true in Greece as well

as in England, amongst philosophers as well as Puritans. And in regard to the definitions which Epicurean and Stoic may give of the Ataraxia of their gods or wise men, the Christian formulæ embrace theirs, for they define Christian experience on one side as "the peace of God," with God for "the very God of Peace," and on the other side represent Christian attainment as an experimental "peace which passes understanding and keeps the heart and mind stayed on Christ."

It is related in the Acts of the Apostles that, when Paul came to Athens, he had reasonings with both Stoics and Epicureans, and that they called him by a slang name ; they said he was a *Spermologos*, *i.e.*, "a picker-up of Learning's crumbs." We have only a rapid summary of what passed between them ; it implies that they had something in common, but were not disposed to treat the matter sympathetically ; but it is lawful to conjecture that, whatever were the causes which provoked their contempt and

disdain, if he had ventured on anything like a discourse of Ataraxia, *i.e.*, if he had preached to them the "God of Peace" and "the peace of God," each side of the philosophic audience might have found something in the strange new preacher that was not wholly described under the head of "some new thing, such as Athenians love, or plagiarised old thing, such as Athenians despise." Perhaps they might not have called him a *Spermologos* at all. And whatever may be the case with the philosophers, we may be sure that the mystics of all ages would understand his speech about the "peace of God," because they might almost be defined as a people whose ultimate goal is a deep peace, and for whom there is "no joy but calm."

It will not be supposed that we are trying to make out a better case for Epicureans and Stoics than the study of their lives and writings would warrant; we know the weakness of either school, and its limitations and its decline; either name has suffered from those who bore it, as

also has the Christian name ; and the modern connotation of either name is removed a good distance from either early pagan or primitive Christian virtue. But judge them by their best, and they are not so far away that they cannot be made connection with. Epicureanism does not, indeed, make its God of Peace either worshipful or winsome. But it has implicitly a God of Peace. It is true that He does not want us, and we should waste time in appealing to Him. You remember the Epicurean sketch in "The Lotus-Eaters" of Tennyson :—

"For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurled
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curled
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming worlds ;
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,
Clanging fights and flaming towns, and sinking ships and praying hands."

There is still a good distance between Christianity as a religion of the Finder, and the "next best sect," is there not? But we will not spend more time on the Epicureans; they have probably been a good deal misunderstood; their judgment, however, of the nature of God, has been set at naught by the Incarnation. And the same thing is true of the Stoics, whose Ataraxia tended to mere apathy, which the Christian variety does not.

Returning to the question of experimental peace, such as is involved in the state of Ataraxia, it will be seen that this is one of the points upon which the Scriptures become hyperbolic, whether Old Testament Scriptures or New Testament Scriptures. Thus peace is said to be perfect, for "Thou wilt keep him in peace, in peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee"; it is said to flow like a river, for "Oh that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been like a river"; and it is said to be amongst those things that exceed the ken of

angels or men, for "the peace of God exceeds all understanding."

Now, when the Scriptures become hyperbolical, we must either become believing or apologetic. We have our choice: it is too good to be false, or it is too good to be exactly true. The saints say the first, the doubters subscribe to the second. But the saints have always this quality, that, having realised that the life which they are working out has become musical both God-ward and man-ward, they are resolutely set to take the top notes of the music, even though at first they may come nearer screaming than singing. Even the hyperboles of Scripture turn out to be reasonable upon a closer scrutiny: "It ought to be true, even if it isn't," is one of our early criticisms of Christ's promises; but "It ought to be, and therefore it is," is the later and the reasonable view.

Why should we say that it is of the nature of hyperbole to describe human experience, when turned into channels of Christian love and faith, as flowing like a river; is it necessarily hyper-

bolical to be continuous or to increase? If the continuity were broken, where were the river? If the depth were diminishing as one moved seaward, we might suspect the flood was going to dry up; but the real rivers don't do that. Or if the river were to lose perceptible flow, and be like the river Cam, of which a clever undergraduate made the description that "in that place there is a river which runneth neither to the East nor to the West, but remaineth always in one place," we might lawfully transfer it from the category of rivers to that of canals; or if the stream were to be like the Sabbatic river, of which Josephus speaks, which ran only once a week, or stopped once a week (I am not sure which), out of respect for God and Moses, we might reasonably say that it was not a river, but could perhaps be classified as a geyser. The apparent hyperbole of the Scripture similitude protects us from believing that Christian peace is intermittent, that it dries up, or stops short, or works only on Sunday, or anything that implies imperfect fellowship between the

believer and his Indweller. When we think it is going to dry up we are as unreasonable as Horace's rustic who stood on the bank of the stream, waiting for it to flow by, that he might be able to cross—

> "Rusticus expectat, dum defluat amnis, at ille
> Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum."

As you can hear the river rolling in that last verse, there is no need for me to translate the passage.

Now, what is the name of this river which we have been describing? Well, it is like many rivers on the map, it changes its name from district to district; but when you get past the cataracts, the name of the river is Ataraxia, and the country is very fertile on both sides of it; and the open sea, which is its home, is not very far ahead of it.

Hyperbole on the experimental side is one of the characteristics of a Divine revelation; while it may perhaps be true, as some one said, that "less grace would find an easier entrance

into our hearts," we should hardly wish to erase the words "He giveth more grace" from the Scriptures, or to subtract from their meaning, which is only an underhand attempt at erasure. Let God promise like God, and do you believe like a child of God. Make a collection of the hyperbolic promises of God, and you have the materials for the dogmatic statement of a full salvation; set them down:—

"I will never leave thee, never forsake thee."

"Neither height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us."

"All things are yours, ye are Christ's."

"The very hairs of your head are numbered."

"May be strong to grasp with all saints the length and breadth and height, and to know."

Write them down, study them, believe them, absorb them; "do not let your heart be disturbed, neither let it be fearful."

We will now see if we can find out some of the characteristics of the undisturbed soul and the undisturbed state.

We shall fix the matter in our mind by call-

ing this passage which we have carved out of the 14th of John a Psalm of Jesus. There are bits of dialogue interwoven in it, but they do not disturb the motion of the music. And our Lord is our Conductor in song as He is our leader in prayer. He spun this quiet song out of the inmost knowledge of His own soul ; the warp and the woof of it were the two natures that went to make the Sonship. Christ's songfulness and calmness may be communicated to us just as His prayerfulness ; and if disciples, overhearing Him when He was on His knees, said, " Lord, teach us to pray," and so were taught, in the same way, when the saints detect His calmness and His brave cheer, they say, " Lord, teach us to sing the psalm of Thy Ataraxia," and they are taught it ; and by making this communication to them He shows them the Father.

For what was His own experience? The answer is that it was a deep sea, the calm of whose depths controlled its surface ; or if exterior perturbations arose, they did not affect

the depth. Here are some lines that may describe that depth :—

"Down where the waves are still, the sea shines clear.

* * * * *

Hither shall come no further sacrifice,
Never again the anguished clutch at life,
Never again great Love and Death at strife.
He who hath suffered all need fear no more,
Quiet his portion now, for evermore."

In a certain sense these experiences are common property between the saints and their Lord, but they are theirs because bestowed and communicated by Him. And when we say that we must "make the surface as the depth," and that this is Ataraxia, it is presupposed that the depth exists. The Scriptures describe it under the term of a life hid with Christ in God. That is our depth. Ataraxia is only one characteristic of the mystical union according to which the outward life in the world is conformed to an inward life with God.

If we are to *make the surface like the depth*, we may put it another way, and say that we

are to *make the open sea like the harbour*. Faber uses this figure in one of his hymns on the greatness of God, and says:—

> "Out on that sea we are in harbour still
> And scarce advert to winds and tides,
> Like ships that ride at anchor, with the waves
> Flapping against their sides."

He means that the ship he sails in is a steady ship, as steady in an open sea as when anchored in harbour; it is a very steady ship, the good ship Ataraxia. The goodness and greatness of God, when understood, produce steadiness and induce calm. As Faber says elsewhere:—

> "Then on Thy greatness I will lay me down,
> Already life is heaven to me!
> No cradled child more softly lies than I—
> Come soon, eternity!"

As a matter of fact, eternity is come already.

I was once staying with some friends in the city of Wilmington, Delaware, and the room in which they put the pilgrim to sleep was adorned with a bed coverlet made out of old brown

linen which had been spun in the old days, in some log house of what was then the frontier, by the grandmother of the lady of the house. Over it she had worked with her needle lines from Mrs. Browning to the following effect :—

> "God's greatness
> Flows around our incompleteness,
> Round our restlessness His rest."

When I came down in the morning they asked me how I had slept, and my answer was, "How could I have slept other than well with such a text as that on top of me?" The open sea was like the harbour that night. A word through Mrs. Browning had said "Peace, be still."

An undisturbed soul is a beautiful thing, whether waking or sleeping—for, whether we wake or sleep, we live together with Him. When we pray, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us," this is one of the things we are praying for ; without it we cannot be made perfect.

We have known some souls of this class; they have not been recluses, living in a region from which disturbance is artificially excluded; they have been men and women, busy in a busy world. I knew one of them, since gone to his rest, who carried on an active service for his Master in the busiest of all cities, and who selected for himself a telegraphic address which might stand at the head of his notepaper. What do you think this busy man's address was? It was this :—

"Undisturbed, London."

And it always found him at home—that is to say, in God—so far as I could judge of his dwelling-place in the days when I knew him, before he had run out his leasehold in the Church militant and taken up his freehold in the Church triumphant. Such an one, living at such an address, verifies the truth of the Scripture which says of the good man that—

"He shall not be afraid of evil tidings,
His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

But perhaps in those days they had no black-edged letters and no telegrams. Whatever they had, they had bad news. I admit that the telegram, however, as a test of the state. If we had that medical instrument called a sphygmograph attached to our pulse, most of us would show a rise in the index if a telegram came into our hands. It is certainly so, and nothing but persistent communion with God will cure it.

A man was attending one of the great religious gatherings in Western America; he was a farmer, several hundreds of miles from home, and when the spiritual life of the meetings was at its height he received a telegram, saying, "The grasshoppers are eating your corn." What was he to do? He could not telegraph back to the grasshoppers to stop eating the corn; he could not get back himself and stop them. So he said: "If my Father wishes to feed His grasshoppers on His corn, I have nothing to say to it." Was that Stoicism or Fatalism? Neither of these: it was just Ataraxia.

I have said nothing in what precedes with regard to the historical setting in which this jewel of Christ's teaching is found. We must not drive sequence too hard, and it is possible that the instinct which places a chapter division at the point where "Let not your heart be troubled" stands is one which internal evidence may justify. On the other hand, it may be argued, from purely spiritual grounds, that it is right to place the words in close sequence with the warning to Peter, so as to read the injunction to Ataraxia into a soul that was already, or would be presently, in a state of deep trouble.[1] In that case the medicine would have been placed near the disease; and it can hardly be doubted that Ataraxia is a genuine

[1] The objection has been made that in that case our Lord would not have used the plural in "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe ye in God," &c. But this seems not to allow sufficiently for the disturbance which was affecting the whole of the apostolic company whose companionship with Peter is intimated in Mark xiv. 31 by the words "And so said they all in like manner." Perhaps this reference may justify the use of the plural in John xiv. 1.

prophylactic in the spiritual pharmacopœia, when we consider the language of St. Paul to the Philippians to the effect that "the peace of God shall garrison your hearts." So we may say, if we please, that our Lord mixed this draught for Peter and held it out for him to drink, and that it was the proper antidote for his falling-sickness. Interior calmness means interior and exterior strength.

Whether we are right or not in our interpretation of the sequence in the Fourth Gospel, we can hardly be wrong in the conclusion to which our study pointed us. I find the same truth brought out in a striking passage in a book which I read some years since, called "The Gospel of the Nineteenth Century." I don't like the title of the book, and the less because we are already in the twentieth century. But here is the passage to which I refer :—

"True calmness is the accompaniment of steadfastness of soul. It is the offspring of perfect trust in God. There is a beautiful figure

employed in the Apocalypse to denote the calmness of the soul which arises from the consciousness of God's presence. Before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal. The idea conveyed to our minds by this emblem is that of a sea, not of glass, but like glass, a sea the glassy surface of whose waters is ruffled by not so much as a passing breeze, and whose crystal depths are lit up with sunshine, a sea smooth and clear as crystal. The beauty of the emblem is that it combines the most restless, unstable thing in nature with the idea of perfect repose and tranquillity. The sea in its restlessness is a true likeness of the human heart. Every breath of wind disturbs the one, every breath of adversity troubles the other. But there is something which can bring perfect repose to the soul, the presence of God. This is the truth which is taught by this sublime image of the sea like glass before the throne. It represents the calm of a soul which dwells in the presence of God. We think of heaven as calm because it is out of reach of the storms of

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earth, but this is not the idea conveyed by the vision. The heaven which it reveals is a heaven on earth. The scene of the Apocalypse is laid, not in some far-off sphere, some fabled Elysium, but here on earth. Heaven is within the good man's heart. The sea which is before the throne is smooth and clear as crystal, not because it is remote from earthly storms, but because the Spirit of God moves upon the face of the waters."

I must confess that I do not see why this beautiful place of mystical exegesis should be labelled so unfortunately as "Gospel of the Nineteenth Century"; that must have been a publisher's title, one would think. The saints have nothing to do with the nineteenth century; they live in Him who is called Yesterday, To-day, and For Ever.

MARY AND MARTHA

CHAPTER III

MARY AND MARTHA

SOME one was recently remarking to me that it was not commonly realised how many sermons had been preached on the subject of Martha and her sister Mary; nor, it might be added, how much heat had been developed by the sermons, especially amongst the feminine part of the community. Every revival of religion, every mystical movement, brings these two sisters on to the screen of the Gospel, and when they are thus projected it is impossible to avoid the question, "Which of the two, do you think, loved the Lord best?" with perhaps the added and less worthy question, "Which of them do you like best?" And under either

head the judgment of the Church has been a divided one. I do not mean that all references to the subject are polarised references; when, for instance, Milton informs one of his young lady friends that—

> "The better part with Mary and with Ruth
> Thou chosen hast,"

he was as little reflecting upon the fact that Mary had a sister as upon the previous husband whom Ruth was trying to improve upon. But, on the other hand, when Charles Wesley was writing the splendid hymn—

> "O Love Divine, how sweet Thou art!"

especially the verse—

> "Oh that I could for ever sit
> With Mary at the Master's feet!"[1]

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[1] Some of our modern hymn-books omit this verse for sentimental reasons, or mutilate it: their judgment is faulty: it was, perhaps, right to remove a verse which followed about "beloved John," but this verse is the highest point of the hymn and must not be removed.

he was writing at a time when evangelical piety was definitely engaged in dissecting the two sisters, to find out which of them had the larger and the warmer heart. For the question comes up in other Methodist hymns, especially in the form of the eirenicon which suggests that the two sisters might be compounded into a single soul that should find no contradiction between the kitchen of carefulness and the doorstep of delight: thus we are admonished to—

> "Serve with careful Martha's hands
> And Mary's loving heart!"

or, in a less pronounced and personal statement, are taught to say—

> "My hands are but engaged below,
> My heart is still with Thee."

But whatever attention the evangelicals may have paid to Mary and her sister Martha, that is as nothing to the attention which has been bestowed upon them by writers of mystical

divinity, in whose systems Mary stands for what they call the Contemplative Life and Martha for the Active Life.

If, for instance, you were to turn to Madame Guyon's Commentaries upon the interior sense of the Scriptures, you would find her discoursing something like this:—

"Martha receives Jesus into her house; that is as much as the active life can attain to. But Mary, who signifies the contemplative life, was seated. That 'being seated' expresses the repose of her contemplation; in that sacred rest she does nothing but listen to the voice of her dear Master, who teaches, nourishes, and quickens her with His own word. Oh! Mary, happy Mary, to hear that word! It makes itself heard because you put yourself in a state to hear it: you listened for it, and you rested in that silence and that peace without which it is not possible to hear that word which is heard only in heart-silence!"

She continues her commentary with an appeal to those who are opposing the doctrine of the

Inward Way. She tells them that this single passage from the Gospel ought to convince them that they are wrong. The whole doctrine of the Scriptures is summed up in these words of the Gospel of Luke which teaches us to leave Multiplicity and Care and Anxiety and Undue Concern, and to enter into Simplicity and Unity of Spirit and Abandonment, and Surrender and Peace and Tranquillity and Silence ; to leave the multiplied worries of action, and to enter into the repose of contemplation.

She then points out that although one has to abandon the Active Life for the Contemplative, the ultimate intention is their reunion, according to which we shall enter into exterior works without losing interior peace. All the trouble arises from having sought after two states which ought to be united in a single experience. And then she concludes her brief comments by saying that " the Truth assures us that there is only one thing necessary and Mary has chosen it. What has Mary chosen ? To listen to God and rest in Him. That is the one thing

needful, to be attentive to Him, this is what we are to choose. And, oh! inconceivable blessing, he who makes the choice has the added gain that no one takes it from him. No one can plunder so great a blessing from the man who has it: it is given him in the interior depth, and no man can pluck it up. That is why St. Paul said, 'Neither height nor depth . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus,' grounded and established in Him, and apart from all merits of the Creature"; so Madame Guyon adds the last verse of the 8th of Romans as a pendant to the last verse of the 10th of Luke, and they certainly seem to belong together.

She discusses the same problem in the little book called "The Short Method of Prayer," where a special section is given to the question of the relation of the Human Activity to the Divine Life; and she defends herself vigorously against the charge of prohibiting some from active service, using often the very same words

that we noted above from her Commentaries: "Instead, therefore, of prohibiting activity, we enjoin it: but in absolute dependence on the Spirit of God, that His activity may take the place of our own."

This can only be effected by the concurrence of the creature; and this concurrence can only be yielded by moderating and restraining our own activity, that the activity of God may gradually gain the ascendency, and finally absorb all that is ours, as distinguishable from it.

"Jesus Christ hath exemplified this in the Gospel. Martha did what was right, but because she did it in her own spirit, Christ rebuked her. The spirit of man is restless and turbulent; for which reason it does little, though it would appear to do much. 'Martha,' saith Christ, 'thou art careful, and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.' And what was it that Mary had chosen? Repose, tran-

quillity, and peace. She apparently ceased to act, that the Spirit of Christ might act in her : she ceased to live, that Christ might be her Life."

So much having been said with regard to Madame Guyon and her mystical interpretation of Martha and Mary, we go on to observe that the allegory of the Contemplative and Active Life furnished by the two sisters is not her own invention, but is a commonplace of the spiritual teachers of the Church. Suppose we try and find out what St. Bernard would think about it. We remember that St. Bernard is not only a monk, but a statesman, a man out of the world and very much in it. So we should expect that he will speak well both of Mary and Martha, and will try to combine their excellences in a sum total of Christian virtue, just as Wesley's hymn tells us to do and as Madame Guyon's explanation also suggests.

For example, when he preaches on the Canticles, and comes to the text where the Bridegroom says, " How beautiful are thy

cheeks, like the cheeks of a turtle dove!" [1] he has to show what are meant by the cheeks of a pious soul, how *Intention* as he calls it is the whole face, the *matter* upon which we are intent is one cheek, the *cause* of our intention is the other, and of course we are to be intent upon God, and for God's sake. If we have to give our mind to outward things, but do it for God's sake, that is Martha's activity, but not necessarily Mary's spiritual leisure. He will not say that Martha has reached perfect beauty; she is still anxious and troubled about many things; she covers herself with dust in many duties. (Poor, dusty Martha!)[2] However, her pure intention will shake the dust off her by and by, perhaps when she lies down to her last sleep. Meanwhile the ideal beauty is that of the shy and solitary bird, the turtle-dove. We should imitate its shyness and its love of solitude. We should sit solitary, as she does.

[1] This must be the Vulgate of Cant. i. 9: "Pulcræ sunt genæ tuæ, sicut turturis."

[2] My comment, not St. Bernard's.

We have nothing in common with the crowd, nothing with the multitude. Our business is to forget our own people even, and our father's house, and then the King will greatly desire our beauty, and say that our cheeks are lovely, like the turtle-dove; and so on, through all the praises of a quiet life with Christ, the necessity for which has not been done away because we happen to have seen the weakness and insufficiency of mere monasticism.

In a similar manner when he comes to the text which says, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His, and He feeds amongst the lilies," he has to explain what and who are the lilies—as, for example, that the lilies are conspicuous by their whiteness and their sweetness; and spirits also have what we call by the same name, a scent and a harmony of figure. And that is the lily-state, which never lacks either purity or sweetness. The Lord takes away from us guile and sadness; He makes us simple and He makes us happy. And when He is said to feed amongst such lilies, it expresses His

delight in pure and gladsome souls. Such were Mary and Martha, to whose house the Lord went to feed and to be fed. (Mary and Martha were a pair of lovely lily-souls, one of them in the front parlour and the other in the kitchen!)[1]

In a sermon which he preached on the Assumption of the Virgin he discusses what the good part is which was not to be taken away from Mary; he asks what comfort it could to be toiling Martha to be told of the excellent choice her sister; he praises a mixed life, of both active and passive elements. For does not David say, "O God, my heart is ready, is ready"; [2] and in saying "ready" twice over he means that he is ready for a quiet time with the Lord, and ready also to serve his brethren and his neighbours. The better part is the work of devotion to the Lord; the best part is

[1] Again I epitomise and popularise Bernard's argument.

[2] The Vulgate again: "Paratum cor meum Deus, paratum cor meum." In the English version: "My heart is fixed, my heart is fixed."

to be perfect in both interior devotion and exterior service. In this house, says he, we must have all three States represented, Mary and Martha and Lazarus—Mary to think pious and sublime thoughts of her God, Martha to think kind and merciful thoughts of her neighbour, *and Lazarus to think sadly and humbly of himself*.

St. Teresa, most practical and level-headed of the ascetical school of mystics, shows an inclination towards Martha and away from Mary, as commonly interpreted; and we can perhaps read between the lines and conclude that she had been a little overdone with those in her convent who practised too exclusively the cult of the younger sister. Hence she says in her book called "The Interior Castle" (Eng. trans., p. 197):—

"Believe me, Martha and Mary must go together in entertaining our Lord, and in order to have Him always with us, we must treat Him well and provide food for Him. How could Mary have entertained Him in

sitting always at His feet, if her sister had not helped her. His food is, that we should strive in every possible way that souls may be saved, and may praise Him.

"You may make two objections: one that our Lord told Mary she had 'chosen the better part'; true, because she had already performed the office of Martha, and showed great regard for our Lord by washing His feet, and wiping them with her hair."

You see that, without stopping to discuss Teresa's harmonisation of Gospel narratives, we must admit that Teresa was in favour of combining the virtues of the two sisters in her spiritual ideal.

It would be easy to give you other instances of the way in which the mystical fancy played round the case of the two sisters; for example, we shall find that St. Macarius of Egypt is more favourable to sister Martha than most of his brethren:—

"When the work of prayer and discourse is fittingly carried out, it exceeds every other

virtue and commandment. The Lord Himself is witness thereof: for when He turned into the house of Martha and Mary, and Martha was occupied with serving, while Mary sat at His feet and feasted on the ambrosia of His divine speech, and her sister was blaming her because she did not share the work with her, and came to Christ about it, then He put the chief thing before the subordinate and said, 'Martha, Martha,' &c. Now, He did not say this as though He reprobated the work of service, but in order that He might put the greater before the less. For how could He have stood aloof from service: Himself becoming the pattern of it, by washing the disciples' feet; and He was so far from hindering it, that He enjoined on His disciples to do the same to one another. . . . However, you see first things claim first place; but they may spring from the same blessed root." [1]

So much having been said with regard to the degrees of virtue reached by the two sisters,

[1] Macarius: "De Oratione."

it is proper to stop and ask whether we are not treating the subject too much as a judgment of fair women, *from a woman's point of view*. St. Bernard counts with Madame Guyon in this inquiry, and I hasten to put in the missing factor, in order that the Gospel of the day can be considered Universal Gospel, by showing that there is distinctly a man's side to the question as well as a woman's. You will see it at once if I ask you a blunt question. Did you ever have your papers put in order, or your books dusted? Was not the person who undertook that arduous task of the opposite sex and of the sisterhood of St. Martha? Is not the sorting of papers and the rehabilitation of the outsides of books as much a matter of feminine diaconate as the peeling of potatoes or the beating of eggs? But I need not labour the point: it has been done for me by Dr. John Watson in his story of Rabbi Saunderson. Rabbi Saunderson had a housekeeper whose name was Mrs. Pitillo (Martha Pitillo was her long name, for cer-

tain), and he tells us of her gifts in the following strain :—

"She had the episcopal faculty in quite a conspicuous degree, and was, I have often thought, a woman of sound judgment.

"We were not able at all times to see eye to eye, as she had an unfortunate tendency to meddle with my books and papers, and to arrange them after an artificial fashion. This she called tidying, and in its most extreme form, cleaning. With all her excellences, there was also in her what I have noticed in most women, a flavour of guile, and on one occasion, when I was making a brief journey through Holland and France in search of comely editions of the Fathers, she had the books carried out into the garden and dusted. It was the space of two years before I regained mastery of my library again, and unto this day I cannot lay my hands on the Service-book of King Henry VIII., which I had in the second edition, to say nothing of an original edition of Rutherford's 'Lex Rex.' It does not become

me, however, to reflect on the efforts of that worthy woman, and, if any one could be saved by good works, her place is assured. I was with her before she died, and her last words to me were, 'Tell Jean tae dust yir bukes ance in sax months, and for ony sake keep ae chair for sittin' on.' It was not perhaps the testimony one would have desired in the circumstances, but yet, Mr. Carmichael, I have often thought that there was a spirit of—of unselfishness, in fact, that showed the working of grace."

Later in the same evening Mr. Saunderson's mind returned to his friend's spiritual state; for he enters into a long argument, to show that while Mary was more spiritual, Martha must have been within the Divine Election.

My friends ask me sometimes, when I quote the judgment of the experts out of the past of the Church, what I think of the matter myself.

This question I am now able to answer, in the sense that I think with Rabbi Saunderson.

Having now delved sufficiently into the past, we may now profitably return to the uncom-

mented Gospel, and the most obvious conclusions that can be drawn therefrom. We shall assume, then, that any separation between the active and the contemplative life is not of the nature of a final settlement. If they are separated for a time, it is that they may be united for ever, for each requires the other for its perfection, and we ought to be able to pass instinctively from one to the other, without any feeling that we have left the temple and gone into the street. At the same time, we have to remember that in this point of view the spiritual has the right of way as over against the material. The elder must serve the younger; Martha is the elder, as has been divined by an acute exegesis from the Bethany passages in the fourth Gospel, especially from the statement that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." So Martha has to turn into younger sister. But, just as in the first instance, where the words were used of the elder serving the younger, the pair were really twins, so we may say of Martha and Mary, the

Active and the Contemplative. It will, however, not be recorded that "Mary have I loved, and Martha have I hated"; the Scripture has provided against that. For a person is not hated because she is reproved and admonished, and I think we may say that the repetition of her name implies exhortation or reproof of the strongest kind. Jesus had a habit of using the repeated form of address. This has often been noticed; but few people know how many passages where our Lord is making an address have a various reading intimating that the person was addressed in a double form. We are familiar with "Simon, Simon"; with "Saul, Saul"; with 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem"; all of which are warnings or reproofs, and it is difficult to separate "Martha, Martha" from this group; but there is another group supplied by the readings of the New Testament, readings which are probably genuine, though neglected by the editors, according to which our Lord calls the dead to life by a repeated address. Thus He said to the maiden, "Maid, Maid, I say unto

thee, Arise"; and so, "Young man, young man," in the miracle at Nain; and last, and most important of all, He said, "Lazarus, Lazarus, come forth." This is not the place to discuss the value of the individual readings; the early Fathers knew them and drew attention to them.

Thus Aphrahat says in his 8th Homily: "The Lord in His first advent raised three dead to life, that the testimony of three might be confirmed to us. For when He raised the widow's son, He called him by a double word, 'Young man, young man, arise.' And he arose in life. In the same way He called twice the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, and said, 'Maid, maid, arise.' And her spirit returned, and she arose. And when Lazarus was dead, He came to the tomb, and prayed and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus (Lazarus), come forth.' And the dead man came forth from the sepulchre."

That will suffice to show that the repeated call was believed to have an urgency of its own.

And I shall assume that multiplicity, out of which Martha was called by the repetition of the reproving voice, is, in a way, a kind of death, like the state of Saul, when the voice from heaven called him in a similar manner.

Now, I am aware that many resent the emphasis which is in this way put upon simplicity of life and occupation. They dislike the new reading, "a few things, Martha, or one." They dislike the abandonment of an old interpretation, which has certainly had gracious results attaching to it. "You have spoiled my best sermon," said one of the revisers when the change was agreed on. And certainly it does sound much higher to say that the one thing needful was to choose Christ and attach oneself to Him; and it looks like a bathos, to make Christ peep into the kitchen and say to Martha not merely that three courses are as good as ten, but that one course is as good as three!

Why should our Lord trouble to simplify life and our ideas of what life consists in?

The answer is that both our happiness and our usefulness depend upon the simplifications which we introduce into life, or which He introduces for us. And the limitation works out in this way. It relieves us from distraction, and it finds us the leisure which is necessary for the cultivation of the spiritual life. How important this thought of leisure with Christ is! In the vocabularies of the early Christians there are two words which are difficult to translate. One is the word Σχολάζω (*Scholazo*)—the Christian takes time, or has leisure. It occurs in the First Epistle of the Corinthians (1 Cor. vii. 5)—"that ye may have leisure for prayer." So in Polycarp: "The Christian takes time for prayer" (σχολάζει). And the corresponding Latin word *vacat* is everywhere in some classes of writers: shall we translate it, "The Christian is free for Christ, is free for prayer." Well, it is only by the culture and habits of the spiritual life that this blessed leisure and beautiful vacancy and long expected holiday is obtained. And if we insist

on going into all the pleasures, knowing all the people, having everything handsome about us, and the like, we shall never know either the life of the turtle-dove or the perfume and beauty of the lily.

And we may say nearly the same thing over people that insist on going to meetings every night in the week, and are too tired to talk to the Lord either when they lie down or when they rise up. As St. Bernard says, they are a very dusty people; and if they had known better, they might have been covered with another kind of dust, of which the Psalmist speaks when he talks of "wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

In all this we are careful to say nothing disparaging of sister Martha. Her menu was admirable, and no doubt she loved the Lord; no doubt they all loved the Lord, and there might be a Scripture which says that "Jesus was loved by Martha, and her sister and Lazarus": but it is one thing to love the

Lord, and another thing to take all the opportunities to cultivate the relation of love with Him. There is the good part, there is the elect portion, there the inviolable right and privilege and advantage, where settled peace is found, and where all is enjoyed which the world gives not nor takes away.

THE USE OF THE CONCORDANCE AND OF THE BIBLE TEXT-BOOK

CHAPTER IV

THE USE OF THE CONCORDANCE AND OF THE BIBLE TEXT-BOOK

I SUPPOSE that we are all of us agreed that there is a sense in which the best commentary upon the Bible is the Bible itself. We do not mean by that to disparage in any way those busy men who have sought to elucidate from all quarters the obscurities of the text. If they were consulted, they would maintain that they always regarded as the leading principle in their interpretations the duty of explaining the Bible by the Bible. And any one can see the reasonableness of this ; for if Paul agrees with himself, then we may ask Paul to explain Paul ; and if John agrees with John, then we take

John as our guide to the meaning of John. In the same way, if there is, as we believe, a substantial underlying agreement, both in experience and in expression, between the body of our teachers in the New Testament, then the fact of this underlying agreement makes it necessary that we should use one teacher to explain the meaning and to throw light upon the experience of another; and going one step farther, if there is a connection between the teaching of the Old Testament and the teaching of the New, which makes the latter to be the advance and outcome of the former, it will be necessary to read either one of the Testaments with the other (if it does not sound too Irish to say so) open at the same time.

And I think this must be what Wesley and others meant when they said that they had become men of one book: literally, of course, this could not be true; for in that case Wesley ought not to have published his "Notes on the New Testament" which made all his preachers to be men of at least two books.

Moreover, the Bible itself is not a single book. It is 39 + 27 books, or 66 books; and some of these are composite. Some people, for instance, say there are two Isaiahs: it does not affect our reasoning if there should be 67 books instead of 66 in the collection. So that to talk of being a man of one book only means that one has chosen to frequent a single library to the exclusion of other libraries.

But it is certain that the person who most frequents the library in question will, if he is an intelligent and thoughtful person, be the keenest to seek help from all quarters for the purpose of illustrating the volumes that he loves. So that it is almost impossible for him to be a man of one book. Now, suppose that such a person is a preacher of the Word, one who enjoys the privilege of access to the people in the matter of religious teaching and of access to God in order that he may himself be religiously taught. What is the best kind of help that we can recommend such an one in the matter of external apparatus

for the knowledge of the Scripture? We shall all be agreed that the inward man must be saturated with the sense of the Divine Presence; he ought to be a baptized soul, one that knows how to come into harmony with God and how to keep the harmony when he comes to the blessed place where it is his definite and personal experience.

But while we shall all be agreed that if the first thing to be sought is that we may be charged up to the point of saturation with the influences of the Spirit of God, the second thing is that we should understand how to saturate the outward mind with a knowledge of the Scripture. For a Bibleless preacher to venture upon a Christian platform is as bad as for a prayerless professor to frequent the bedsides of the sick and the dying. The devil laughs at such an one, and very often the people laugh at him too. He may make the most brilliant epigrams, tell the most engaging stories, repeat the tit-bits from the most trustworthy newspapers (if there are any trustworthy

newspapers); but after a time the sparkle is out of the epigrams, the stories have become stale, and the newspapers are back numbers. On the other hand, a biblical preacher gives his message in language that is better than his own, and his subject-matter does not wear out or grow old, he is occupied with an everlasting gospel, and the Spirit of the Lord honours his preaching by attaching to it permanent results in the conversion and sanctification of individual men and women. The Bible-preacher does not go out of date, because the Bible itself has not gone out of date: on the contrary, he is more in demand than ever, and the cry of the churches that are eager for spiritual life must surely be very much like the message that was sent after my late friend Edward Millard, who some years since visited the Mission churches in Armenia; "Send us," they said, "some more Bible-preachers." A persecuted and suffering seed of the kingdom knows what is best suited to its conditions; and what suits their condition is likely to be also the proper cordial for ours.

Now, in dealing with the question how to turn our preachers into Bible-preachers, and how to make them saturate with Scripture, I find practically two directions in which I have had a great deal of help ; they are announced at the head of this paper as the concordance and the text-book—two of our best practical helps, and two of the most accessible. Neither of them is very costly ; a Scripture text-book, like the one to which I shall presently refer, the " Daily Light on the Daily Path," can be had for a very small sum ; a concordance is more costly, but it is becoming common to bind up with the Bible a concordance of the principal words, at least ; and although the matter is complicated by the fact that there are two rival translations in the field, you will find that a book like Dr. Wright's " Bible Treasury " will give you the necessary guidance to find where any word that you are seeking occurs in either of the two translations. So that the apparatus for concordance work is not very costly : you can go into the business, at least in English, with a very moderate capital.

Now let us think for a little while what use we are going to make of our concordance when we get it. In the first place, we propose to search the Scriptures for the occurrence of any given word or expression, in order that by comparing Scripture with Scripture we may find out all that the Spirit-filled men have said on any particular subject. In the second place, we propose to search the Scriptures, not so much for exact words as for parallel ideas, so as to find out what is the spiritual unity that underlies the language of the Spirit-filled men. The study of the parallel words will lead us on, almost insensibly, to the study of the ideas. Let us take an instance. Suppose that you are searching the Scripture in order to get at the meaning of the very first promise in the New Testament, viz., the words, "He shall save His people from their sins." We take the word "save" and study it in the light of the New and Old Testaments. We find plenty of passages, because our God is a saving God, and His message to men in all times is a message of

salvation. We find every kind of distress, individual and national, comprehended under the doctrine that the Lord is with His people to save them and to deliver them. We find that the word has an application to time, as well as to particular distress ; it can be said in the past tense, so that some of the salvation is behind us, as when Peter said that the Lord had sent His angel and delivered him from the expectation of the Jews, or when Jude says that "the Lord saved His people out of Egypt," [1] or when Paul says "He delivered us from so great a death." [2]

But then it can also be said in the present tense, as when we are told by Paul that Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father," [3] in which case it is clear that the world is not thought of as passing immediately away, but as a con-

[1] Jude 5 (σώσας).
[2] 2 Cor. i. 10 (ἐρύσατο).
[3] Gal. i. 4 (ἐξέληται).

tinuous present world, in which the believer experiences a continuous present salvation.

Then there is the further outlook, in which the salvation is contemplated as future, according to which we are told that "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him," [1] and the uttermost salvation has for one of its interpretations the meaning that "He is able to save us *up to the goal*," as my friend Frank Crossley used to put it.

Taking the three tenses together, we have St. Paul's statement, "who delivered us [2] from so great a death and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us," in which, as some one said, you have the past, present, and future of the Christian's deliverance.

But suppose we look a little closer into the passages which we have explored for under the heads "save" and "deliver" in the New Testament. We shall find that the scope of the words is very wide. This becomes even

[1] Heb. vii. 25 (*σώζειν εἰς τὸ παντελές*).

[2] 2 Cor. i. 10 (*ἐρύσατο*).

more striking if we were able to make the examination with a Greek concordance, or if the concordance were arranged so as to give the marginal alternative translations as well as those which are introduced into the text. For instance, we should find Jesus saying to the ruler of the synagogue whose daughter had just died, "Fear not, only believe, and she will be saved"—σωθήσεται (Luke viii. 50); and in the same way, when they bring the sick people to touch the hem of our Lord's garment, we are told that "as many as touched Him were saved"—ἐσώζοντο (Mark vi. 56). So in Acts iv. 10 we should find Peter asking the rulers whether they wanted to know by what means the lame man *had been saved* (σέσωσται); and we should conclude, from these and a number of similar cases where the word is used, that it had almost a medical force, and carried with it the idea of restored conditions and repaired functions. Certainly all of this is involved in the great salvation.

But then, as I said, we not only want to collect words and compare them, but we want to

detect the common ideas which are in the minds of those who use the words, and to watch the way in which the ideas become more and more definite, and more and more spiritual and comprehensive.

A recent writer [1] has said with regard to this idea of salvation something very like what I have been saying. He says that "in the classical literature and in the public inscriptions of Greece the words 'save' and 'saviour' nearly always refer to material preservation and safety. . . . Any one who consults a concordance of the Bible can see how the meaning of the word 'save' changes and rises as one passes from the Pentateuch and the historical books of the Old Testament to the Psalms and Isaiah. In the earlier stages of Israel's history it has a predominantly worldly and temporal meaning; at a later time the salvation longed for by the inspired writers is not merely worldly but spiritual, involving a right relation to God and a consequent state in one's self.

[1] Percy Gardner, "Exploratio Evangelica," p. 321.

"Among Christians we find all three of the renderings of the word 'save' in use—the lower, the middle and the higher meaning. Some most earnestly desire safety from foes and the mischances of life. Some most frequently and most ardently desire the salvation of their souls after death from the flames of hell and the power of Satan. The more spiritual schools of Christianity rather lay stress on the need of salvation from one's own worse self and from the terrible power of evil habit," &c.

It appears, then, that we are led by the mere study of the concordance, without any other commentary, to the conclusion that salvation is a word which in the story of the Church is constantly putting on newer and higher and more wonderful meanings, both for the world that now is and for that which is to come. And what is true of the Church is also true of the individual soul, which recapitulates in itself the history of the tribe.

Now, I have selected this instance because it bears on the question of preaching. A man

who is called to preach must have one corner of his mind given up to the parallels by which Scripture elucidates itself; he must find out where a given word is used, and what colour the word takes at particular times and amongst particular peoples. He does not, of course, go into his pulpit with a Bible under one arm and a concordance under another; but his renewed nature has in it both Bible and concordance, and it is a part of the work of the Good Remembrancer, the Blessed Spirit, to turn the pages of the concordance or Scripture so as to bring to light the meaning, and to reinforce what is said by the method of two or three witnesses in whose mouth every word may be established. Sermons preached in the power of the Spirit are often very rich in the parallels drawn from different parts of the Scriptures; and conversely, when one gets into the habit of noting the parallels, the material is often at hand for enforcing truth in the power of the Spirit of God.

For instance, here is a little chain of texts

which I saw hanging on my wall recently in one of the religious almanacs, which chain seems to me to furnish a good ground for a straight talk to Christians ; there were three texts, arranged for three following days, but evidently parts of one idea, and arrived at by the concordance :—

1. "Ye did not receive the spirit of bondage . . . but ye did receive the spirit of sonship" (Rom. viii. 15).

2. "We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. ii. 12).

3. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind" (2 Tim. i. 7).

Here is a beautiful chain of experimental verses, all cast in the same mould, all built upon the same pattern, with the negative first and the positive second ; on one side bondage, worldliness, and fear ; on the other sonship, spiritual gifts, power, love, and sanctified common-sense. Try and work it out in detail.

Often a very little and unimportant word may furnish the clue to some of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. An illustration of this came to me once in my own experience. The Lord gave me, just before I was going to my regular meeting with my friends, a little meditation on one of the prepositions in the New Testament, a word so small that only the most extended concordances would have registered it, but not so small that it could not furnish an adequate text whereby the Spirit might minister to the saints. It was the little word *with*. As far as I can recall the subject, it came out in the following way :

The prepositions in the New Testament are of the nature of theological professors ; they are scribes of the kingdom of heaven ; they have the key of the Divine knowledge. Illustrate from the verse "*Of* Him, and *through* Him and *to* Him are all things." Or take a single word or expression, like the phrase "*in* Christ." How mystical ! How deep in the abysses of God ! In Christ, then

a new creation—"I *in* them and they *in* Me!"

Now observe that in the New Testament the word "with" is an experimental word, it is a summary of experimental theology. And we note that—

(*a*) It is the charter of incorporation of the new order, and holds the key of the Church door. Christ's first disciples signed no creed, embraced no confession, but "He chose twelve that they might be *with Him* and that He might send them forth to preach." And in another Gospel we are told that "they went into an house." Thus the door into the kingdom was an house door—perhaps our Lord's "own hired house," perhaps a house some one lent Him. In the latter case the owner said, "You can come and bring your friends that they may be *with you*"; in the former He Himself said, "You can come in and be My friends and be *with Me*," and the key-word "with" implies converse and retirement: hence we find it said, "When they were alone, privately, they

asked Him," or "When they were come into the house, He asked them."

(*b*) This preposition "with" is the word which gives historical value to the testimony which the witnesses bear concerning him. They could say, "We were *with Him*." Like the earlier companions of St. Francis, they could say, "*Nos qui cum eo fuimus*"—"We who were *with Him*." And it is recognised by others to whom their testimony comes that the value of the testimony turns on this single word, "and they took knowledge of them that they had been *with Jesus*."

(*c*) This preposition can lecture on the continuity of the Church and upon the apostolic succession. Professor With's lectures on the Church are the only ones worth listening to. For imagine that if there was no reinforcement of historical truth by direct communion, we should be getting farther and farther from Christ as the days go by, and our testimony would be a continually extended and a continually weakened chain. The only succession

worth talking about is of those who have "seen a man in the clouds and heard Him talk with them."

(*d*) This preposition can discourse to us not merely out of the past and concerning the present, but it gives special lectures on the life to come. Some one says "to be *with Christ* which is far better." He was not a man who had climbed the outward mountain of transfiguration along with those who saw the glory. His feet had never trodden the dusty highway along with those who first heard the command to "leave all, and follow Me." Yet he does not talk in a lower spiritual strain than the very chief of the apostles. It is not merely that he is "in Christ," or "after Christ," but "*with* Christ," that is his theme, and when he gets on that theme, he is as affectionate as St. John. He defines the life to come by one single preposition, "We shall be ever *with* the Lord."

(*e*) And from this we learn finally what shape a true Christian hope takes. It is a

renewal of a companionship, known in the days of His flesh, or in the period of ours, which renewal is the ultimate definition of heaven. For we say with Baxter :—

> "My knowledge of that life is small,
> The eye of faith is dim;
> But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
> And I shall be with Him."

You see, even a little preposition of four letters can talk great truths to us, and, incidentally, you see how Quaker sermons are made.

Now let us pass on from the question of the use of the concordance to the spiritual men ; and let me draw your attention to that other great help, both for Christian living and Christian preaching—a Bible text-book. And by this I do not mean a book like the birthday text-book, arranged with a single text for every day in the year, though such a little manual is useful enough, especially for intercessional purposes. I mean something more extended ; such a book as "Daily Light on the Daily Path" is the

best that is known to me. It was of incalculable comfort to my wife and myself when we were travelling in Armenia, where over and over again the promises for the day seemed to have been especially designed for the very needs and difficulties in which we found ourselves. "It is a precious little book" we often said one to another.

However, I am not concerned so much with the use of such a little book in individual guidance as with its value in suggesting subjects for orderly spiritual meditation. I happen to know that a great deal of prayer went to the making of this little book, and any one who uses it will come to see that it is a handbook of experimental theology. The best way to see this is to take a specimen page or two and verify whether such a page is not really the substructure of a real spiritual discourse. How will the following bear examination?

"October 10th.

"The whole family in heaven and earth.

"One God and Father of all, who is above all,

and through all, and in you all. Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth, even in Him.

"He is not ashamed to call them brethren. Behold My mother and My brethren. Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in Heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother. Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to My Father and your Father.

"I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony that they held: . . . and white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them that they should rest for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. That they without us should not be made perfect."

I think we must allow that this little chain of

passages brings before us, in a series of rapid glances and instantaneous photographs, the whole structure of the Church of God, its inner relations, its tribulation, its militancy, and its final triumph, in such a way as to contain practically all that Evangelical theology has to say on the subject.

Here is another one of a more individual and experimental character, evidently composed with a view to the comfort of those who are in the borderland between this life and the next :—

"November 14th.

"How wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan ?

"For Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest.

"The priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

"We see Jesus, who was made a little lower

than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee.

"Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth, and was dead: and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen: and have the keys of hell and of death."

What a lovely little liturgy for the visitation of the sick and of the dying! How full of the comfort by means of which we may comfort those that are in trouble and may be ourselves comforted of God.

The text-book, when constructed on the lines of "Daily Light," really takes precedence of the concordance as an aid to spiritual medi-

tation. But as you have probably noticed, it has the concordance behind it at every point; where it differs from a concordance is that it does not proceed so much from verbal coincidence as from the coincidence and the growth of spiritual ideas; and it is these spiritual ideas that we want to bring home, as far as possible in biblical language, to our hearers, when we have the opportunity and the privilege of speaking in the name of our Lord.

THE LORD'S SONG IN A STRANGE LAND

CHAPTER V

THE LORD'S SONG IN A STRANGE LAND

THE psalm which we are going to study is one of the most familiar to us. Everyone knows the 137th Psalm and its refrain, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" In one of its earliest English paraphrases it was known to Shakespeare, and began something as follows :—

"When as we sat in Babylon,
The rivers round about,
And in remembrance of Zion,
The tears of grief burst out,
We hanged our harps and instruments
The willow-trees upon,
For in that place men for their use
Had planted many a one."

So that perhaps it was a favourite psalm with our Elizabethan ancestors. Of course we do not sing it all now. The closing verses are of an imprecatory character, and we have to say of them what Marjorie Fleming said of the murder of Haman's family, that "then Jesus was not come to teach us to be merciful"; but apart from these closing verses, it is a very simple and beautiful psalm. It does not require very much criticism in order to elucidate it, for if the subject of the psalm is the Exile of Israel, we can only assume that it was written during the Exile or after the return. I cannot see that any other critical question can arise as to its date. It would be quite absurd—especially in view of the fact that the psalter itself is a gradual accretion, and this psalm is near the end of the collection—to imagine that any one uttered these lamentations prophetically.

Just in the same way as we are obliged to refer to the time of the Exile the passage in Isaiah which says that "Our holy and beautiful house where our fathers served Thee is

burned up, and all our pleasant things are laid waste," so we are obliged to say that the 137th Psalm is either contemporary history or retrospective history, and the only critical question relates to the choice between these two alternatives.

For myself, I am quite satisfied that the psalm is a post-exilic product, and that in it the experiences of the exile are viewed from the standpoint of the return. If any one should feel uncomfortable at the thought that the Book of Psalms, or at least part of it, should be described as a post-exilic product, such an one may, perhaps, find consolation in the fact that if the psalm itself is post-exilic, it is in evidence for a pre-exilic psalter ; for does it not say, " for there those that wasted us required of us mirth . . . and said, Sing us one of the songs of Zion," so the songs were well known, not only at home but abroad, and had come down out of the past.

Now let us try to realise the situation for ourselves. The daughter of Zion is asked to sing by the daughter of Babel, and she says,

"I cannot sing. Do you not see that I am in mourning? How should I sing?" The situation is something like this. Let us imagine ourselves to be at an evening party; in the course of the evening some one suggests music. "There is Mrs. S., she is a beautiful singer, let us ask her to sing." But the suggestion is immediately checked by the observation: "On no account; do you not see she is in mourning? She has lost her husband; she cannot sing!" Or the suggestion is made: "There is Mrs. X., she has a beautiful contralto voice; I will ask her to sing the most pathetic of all the Scotch ballads, whether for words or music 'Will Ye No' Come Back Again?'" And again the suggestion is checked: "Do you not know that her husband has deserted her? She cannot sing!"

This, then, is the situation of the daughter of Zion—a deserted wife, a refused and forsaken woman, grieved in spirit. And we can appreciate to some extent the depth of her consciousness of desertion by observing how frequently

the prophets labour to remove that spirit from the minds of God's people, and to assure them that they shall no more be termed "forsaken," and that, "though they may forget, yet will I remember thee." But even after the return from the Exile Babel was remembered as a place of mourning and desertion, when it seemed as if JAHVEH had forgotten Israel. It was the place of the silent harp and of the suppressed song. Those that carried them away captive had wasted them and required of them mirth, but they had devastated not merely the land, but the music.

(1) And now to proceed to an orderly discussion of the subject before us. We see in the first place that there are some circumstances in which the song of praise seems to be out of place. For an ideal illustration of such circumstances we might take the case of Moore's "Minstrel Boy" who went to the wars with his wild harp flung behind him, but on returning tore its strings asunder because its songs had been made for the brave and free, and the

singing of them in slavery was not to be thought of. Or we might take an actual instance from my own experience.

I remember well how on our first relief journey in Asia Minor, after the great massacres, we came to the city of Malatiya, the ancient Melitene. The city was in great distress. In one ward only a single Christian man was left alive. The Protestant Church was a heap of crumbling ruins, and everywhere one saw the remains of the wild orgy of passion and violence which had swept over the community. We took an amateur census of the orphans who were starving in the streets of the city, and found over 1,500 in number. Now, obviously in this situation one not only had to relieve, where possible, the outward necessities of starving people, but one had to minister to their spirits, so I arranged for a Sunday meeting in a certain garden, and at the time appointed the wretched people crowded into the place. It was difficult to know how to begin a Christian meeting in the face of such

misery. I suggested that they should sing one of their hymns, but they sent up word to me that since the massacres they hadn't sung anything, and that they could not sing. I said to one of the American missionary ladies by my side, "Begin and sing something and see if they will join in." She did so, and after a while first one and then another quavering voice took up the ancient music. The spell was broken and we had a powerful meeting, but at all events it was true that there were circumstances in which the song of praise seemed to be out of place, if not impossible.

(2) In those very circumstances, however, the evidential power of the song is evidently the greatest. Here, again, we turn to our classical illustration of song, where all seems to forbid song. I mean the case of Paul and Silas in the prison of Philippi, where the stocks and the inner prison at the midnight, following upon the scourgings and public shame, might have furnished a climax of protest against the possibility of the heavenly music; but it was precisely in

those circumstances that the evidential power of the song was felt when the prisoners heard them, and we may say that the songs which Paul and Silas sang were the very gospel for the situation, and perhaps the only gospel possible under the circumstances.

(3) It seems, then, that the very gospel for Babel consisted in that song which Babel unthinkingly called for and which Zion unhappily could not sing. Let us suppose that in response to the appeal the song had actually been sung. Let it be one of the ancient psalms of the pre-exilic Psalter—say the 23rd Psalm, with its sacred shadows, and its spread table, and its joy-anointed locks. What would have been the effect upon the listeners to hear it said—"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies, and Thou anointest mine head with oil, and my cup runneth over"? Certainly such a song as that must have had an evidential value—even the enemies themselves being judges. Or let us suppose that instead of the ancient Psalter our modern Book of

Praise had been accessible, what should we have sung in response to such an appeal, which would have at once set our own hearts at liberty, and produced conviction in the minds of the oppressors ? Would this kind of psalm serve ?

> "Begone, unbelief,
> My Saviour is near,
> And for my relief
> Will surely appear,"

and especially that verse which, by the way, I see some of the hymn-books enclose in brackets as being less suitable for singing or too extended an expression of the spirit (though it is the most powerful experimental verse in the hymn) :

> "His love in times past
> Forbids me to think
> He'll leave me at last
> In trouble to sink ;
> Each sweet Ebenezer
> I have in review
> Confirms His good pleasure
> To help me quite through."

Such a psalm as that may be doggerel on the

literary side, but it is doggerel which the believing heart cannot do without. A more polished song would never mean the same to us—*i.e.*, to those of us who have sung it in the midst of affliction or in the face of death ; and certainly if the song had been sung in Babel, they would have proved what Babel half suspected—that Babel's songs could not compare with the songs of Zion ; thus the appeal to song, especially in unsongful situations, is an appeal to discriminate between the God who is and those who are called gods and are not. The God that answereth by song, let Him be the God.

(4) We have already seen that such music as convinces souls is the product of dark places and of desolate times, at all events is most full of meaning in such places and at such times. We must be prepared to sing in the shade. We must expect, and expect joyfully, that "in the night also His song shall be with me, and my prayer shall be to the God of my life," for we shall never be God's night-

ingales if we only sing by day. Madame Guyon is a good illustration of this; she not only could sing in retirement, as in this verse—

> "The calm retreat, the silent shade,
> With prayer and praise agree,
> And seem by Thy sweet bounty made
> For such as follow Thee;
>
> * * * * *
>
> There, like the nightingale, she pours
> Her solitary lays,
> Nor asks a witness of her song,
> Nor thirsts for human praise";

but she belongs to the singing fraternity of whom Paul and Silas are the patron saints, for many of her most beautiful spiritual songs were actually composed either in the Bastille or in the Castle of Vincennes; and speaking of her own experiences at such times, she says: "I regarded myself as a little bird which you were keeping in a cage for your pleasure, who must sing to fulfil her condition in life. The stones of my prison seemed like

rubies; that is to say, I esteemed them more than earthly magnificence." The actual hymn which she refers to is known to many of us; it begins like this—

"A little bird am I
Shut from the fields of air,
And in my cage I sit and sing
To Him who placed me there,
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleaseth Thee."

That is real Paul and Silas music.

(5) Now, if such conviction lurk in sacred song, it is a serious thing when either individuals or communities lose the power of praising God; for instance, it is one of the sad signs of the times that none of the Evangelical Churches is producing hymns. Once they were all in song, and the value of their music to the Church at large is inestimable. Dr. Watts, for instance, whatever fault we may find with the crudeness of some of his beliefs, at least to the modern mind, was a master of song, and left us many a

permanent expression of the praise of God ; and the time would fail me to tell of Wesley and Robert Robinson, and Williams the Welshman, who, as they say, "had the song," and Bernard Barton the Quaker (for even Quakers sing sometimes). Their music flowed over from their own borders into the nearer or more remote churches, as in the case of Sarah F. Adams, "Nearer to Thee," and J. H. Newman, "Lead, Kindly Light."

When the great revival comes again upon the Churches, it will be either the cause or the effect of sacred song, and perhaps both. Already our hymn-books are in evidence that there is such a thing as interdenominational religion—however much it may please some people to talk of the Bible as if it were a Nonconformist book !

(6) Now let us resolve, as a result of our study, to sing by Babel's stream and in Babel's streets. Let us raise the songs of the Flowery Land in the Black Country.

Mrs. Browning has given us a beautiful illustration of this in a poem which she calls

"My Doves," which she heads with a quotation from Goethe to the following effect: "Divine Wisdom! Thy speech is dove-like." [1] The poem is a parable drawn from two little doves which she possessed, which had been brought from the sunshine of India to the Cimmerian gloom of London.

"My little doves have left a nest
Upon an Indian tree,
Whose leaves fantastic take their rest
And motion from the sea:
For ever there the sea-winds go
With sunlit paces to and fro.

* * * * *

And God them taught, at every close
Of murmuring waves beyond
And green leaves round, to interpose
Their choral voices fond,
Interpreting that love must be
The meaning of the earth and sea.

* * * * *

'Tis hard to sing by Babel's stream,
More hard by Babel street;

---

[1] O Weisheit! du red'st wie eine Taube

But if the soulless creatures deem
Their music not unmeet
For sunless walls, let us begin
Who wear immortal wings within."

(7) It may be inferred from what has been said that we, upon whom the obligation of song rests, are either in exile or on pilgrimage. Sometimes we seem to be the one, sometimes the other. Sometimes we seem to be God's banished ones, and far from our heavenly home. At other times a sense of pilgrimage is with us, and then we desire a fatherland, and declare plainly that we are seeking it. Then the cockle hat and shoon become our most sacred emblems.

I think it will be found that the best songs of the Church are pilgrim songs, and so are some of the worst ; by the worst I mean those that have an unnatural worldliness which is not the true character of God's children. It is one thing to say that "There is a land of pure delight," and quite another thing to sing "O Paradise, O Paradise!"

(8) But if we are in exile or on pilgrimage,

then our life is characterised by constant and unexpected changes; they are not all of them what Ruskin would call "enchanted changes." Some of them are very difficult and very menacing, and we need a few rules for the change of state which the pilgrim's condition is constantly subject to. One rule relates to our outward gear. We must rid ourselves of sackcloth as being at once a superfluity and an incumbrance, an ugliness and a discomfort. There is no room for sackcloth in the experience of a true pilgrim. It is not a New Testament product; it is not a fabric of the kingdom of heaven! Black is an un-Christian colour. We ought not to put it even at the bottom of our box when we travel; let us keep to the rule, "The Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." In our present state of tarriance we may expect the fulfilment of the promise that sorrow and sighing shall flee away. This means that in every change of state we put the bridal dress on the top of the trunk, and the sackcloth no-

where ; but we may put the harp on the top of everything else, and let it be the first thing that we take out when we reach the next stage of our journey ; thus we shall open every new experience by putting on the garment of praise afresh, and by singing the songs of Zion anew. Then we shall find that—

> "Through every changing scene of life,
> In trouble or in joy,
> The praises of my God shall still
> My heart and tongue employ";

and be able to say with the psalmist that "Thou hast taken from me my sackcloth and girded me with gladness, to the end that my glory may sing praise unto Thee and not be silent : O my God ! I will give thanks unto Thee for ever."

THE TIME MACHINE AS APPLIED TO RELIGION

CHAPTER VI

THE TIME MACHINE AS APPLIED TO RELIGION

WE are most of us familiar with the imaginative works of Mr. H. G. Wells, and in particular with that invention of his which he calls the "time machine," by means of which an observer at any given time and in any given place is enabled to project himself into any other time, riding meteorically across the centuries as easily and as rapidly as a good motor-car down a secluded road where there is no policeman. And it is obvious that Mr. Wells's supposed invention would be of the highest value if it had two qualifications. The first is, that the machine should be fitted with a reversing gear; for of what use to us is the knowledge of the future without its counter-

poise in the dark backward and abysm of time? And the second qualification is, that the machine should be capable of an application to ecclesiastical history, as being the most interesting side of human history, and the most perplexing. No doubt it will be at once urged that as the greater includes the less, the problems of Church history are included in universal history, and that the former is only a phase, and conceivingly a passing phase, of the other. The one is a broken arc, with a starting-point, and perhaps a destination, the other may be an unlimited line extended both fore and after.

It would be, for instance, difficult to refute a man who stated the proposition that there was a time when the Church did not exist, and there will be a time when it will cease to be. Such a case was very nearly stated by the late Dean Stanley, only with the word "clergy" substituted for "Church." The analogy of the statements shows how dangerous, at all events, it is to identify the Church with the clergy rather than with humanity (including

the case where ministers are supposed to be the equivalent, in the world of thought, of their congregations). But the problem is really not so simple as Dean Stanley made it. For the question of the Church and its pre-existence or post-existence cannot be raised without the question of the Christ, and the early Fathers were well aware of the connection between the two. Long before the Council of Nicæa had elaborated the formula which forbids a Christian man to say of Christ that "there was, when He was not," and before the clerical powers, who habitually sit in Moses's seat, had, to use Theodore Parker's phrase, climbed up also into the seat of the Messiah, we find early Christian Fathers protesting that the true Church is spiritual and existed before the sun and the moon, using the very expressions which later theological minds accepted as the definition of the Christ. The audacity of these flights is well known to every patristic student. I only allude to them here with the view of making the statement that if any one

supposes that, by means of a Wells motor adapted to the study of human history and capable of motion in either direction, he will soon come to the end of what is called the Church, he will have to pass on the road a number of objections made by Fathers of the second century, such as Hermas and the so-called Second Clement, who will assure him, as he passes, that his tyres will be worn out and his petrol exhausted before he reaches his destination.

Mystically, then, and according to early patristic teaching, the Church is one of the eternal ideas, and exists in a Pattern in the Mount. But we will not venture farther on this line of Platonic thought at present. It is a safeguard against the belief that the Church represents our united capacity for the maintenance of fictions. If we do not care to follow Plato so far up stream as into the Land of Eternal Ideas, we may content ourselves by saying that there was an Ecclesia in the wilderness.

Let it be granted, as Euclid says, that a

time machine exists, and that it is capable of indefinite motion in either direction, and let it be applied to the study of human history on the side of religion. The first thing that you would notice in such a case would be the following: that, if you took an ecclesiastic on board, he would instinctively feel after the reversing gear. It is a clerical habit: but they do it, as St. Paul says of certain preachers in his own day, not sincerely but with the hope of "adding afflictions to my bonds." The chief use they make of the threads of continuity is to twist them into ropes for flagellating the backs of those who do not equate Nicæa with Jerusalem nor think that Chalcedon is a harmless variant for Galilee. And the one thing they forget is that, when the reversing gear is once applied the machine itself is capable of going on in the direction in which it was started, and that it will run back, past priesthoods and behind sacraments and organisations, and fulfil for St. Peter, in a new sense, the promise that "another shall carry thee whither thou wouldest

not." What we describe pictorially is what is actually going on in the region of historical criticism and in the domain of anthropology. But it is not every one who wants to ride backward. Do you ever read the *British Weekly?* do you systematically delve in its pages? I do not mean in those pleasing ethical problems to the right solution of which prizes are attached, nor to those pictorial studies of contorted human frames which provoked a grateful writer recently to write to one of the leading journals and thank the editor for his interesting articles on incurable diseases; I am not referring even to its politics, breezy and honest as they are and sometimes right; the gold-mine of the *British Weekly* is on the first page; the precious metal of the old Gospel protrudes through the scoriæ of the advertisements of modern books about the Gospel. And it will probably be right for all of us to thank God for that, in our time, as probably never before, literary excellence has been joined with spiritual insight and with evangelical fervour in prologues addressed

to the people. And I remember a remarkable article which appeared not long since on "The Future of the Church," in which Dr. Nicoll took a motor ride down the ages to come, and made one feel that if he had lived in the second century he would have written an Apocalypse of the first order—an Apocalypse, too, that would contain a rich and rare deposit of jewels from contemporary writers. I do not think Dr. Nicoll cares much for very early history ; apocalypse is much more his *métier*.

Now, I am no apocalyptist : my business is to explore apocalypses, and, if need be, to explode them, to delve beneath them into the historical situations which produced them and the like. Most of my work is, in this regard, a backward motion, though I am not an ecclesiastic and run no risk now of ever becoming one ; but there is also an inward motion, over and above these backward and forward strainings, which is beyond the region of history and criticism, where the problem of life, considered as communion with God, is

opened, expressed in terms of its own and in treaties of peace which no man knows except those who set their hands to them. These are the things that interest me, and which I know also to interest those who are engaged in the spiritual service of man. There is, then, the forward outlook or prospect, the backward or retrospect, and there is the inward or introspect, *but the greatest of these is the introspect.*

Suppose we really were able to get back to the original Christ, to the first Gospel, and to the primitive Church, should we be glad of the motion? Should we rejoice in the change of view? What is it that we should find in primitive Christianity? Is it the thing that we desire to find? In any case, what advantage hath the primitive Christian? For it is certain that he had many disadvantages. When St. Paul looked backward and asked a similar question, his reply to the inquiry "What advantage hath the Jew?" was that he was the warden of the Divine oracles. There were other advantages, but this was the chief. That

was before they had broken up the oracles, and labelled them with letters of the alphabet. I wonder what St. Paul thinks of it now. And I wonder still more what he would, from our point of view, say when the question is asked, "What advantage then hath the primitive Christian?" Come, brother Paul, jump into your motor and set the index for 1908 A.D. and tell us if this is the right answer. The advantage of the primitive Christian is much every way, but chiefly because he is the witness to the joys of the kingdom of God, and because he has gladness and singleness of heart. Is it true that these are the features of the Christ and of His Gospel and of His Church? that he had them, that the Gospel proclaimed them, and that the Church inherited them? If that is the case, and it should chance that we have lost either simplicity or sincerity, if our locks are dry of the holy anointing of gladness, it is time some reversing or proversing or inversing gear was set in motion for us or by us.

When we talk of going backward, we have

to remind ourselves that we are engaged in historical and critical study, and cannot evade that kind of investigation. In actual experience we go forward, and of necessity : all our efforts to think and act as the first century Christians thought and acted have a fault of impracticability. We cannot unthink, when the race is thinking, except to a very minute extent. One sees this on every side. For example, it used to be said of certain regions of the study of man that there was a notice-board put up to warn trespassers, inscribed with the words—

"No Road this Way."—MOSES.

I went by the place recently and the old board had been taken down, and replaced by—

"*Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum.*"—DARWIN.

It was the man that had taken most steps backward intellectually, in the sense of retrospective research, who prohibited to-day our return to the beliefs that we were brought up on ! Hence, when we try to reproduce previous strata of thought and life, we are,

for the most part, doomed to miserable failure. To go back for the sake of going back is pure superstition, impracticable superstition, and there are things that no one would go back for, if he could ; who is there here to-day who hungers and thirsts for the restoration of the baptism of the dead? And who is there that does not hunger after the baptism with the Spirit? What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole of the obsolete and lose his own soul? But even a question like this requires that we should define the obsolete, and all is not obsolete that seems so. So we get into our car again and ascend the course of time in search of the non-obsolete. The moment we talk of such an expedition, we are joined by the critic and the archæologist. They, too, are going up-stream. "You can come in our boat," they say, "and help to pull it." Meanwhile the inward monitor whispers its warning to us. What advantage hath the critic or the archæologist? Does he recover oracles to us, or is he acquainted with joys? The answer, at first, is hesitating and

uncertain. He does not make us superlatively happy, and if sometimes he dances, it is more often over the dead bodies of his antagonists than the Davidic measure before the Ark. He disappoints us more often than he delights us. Sometimes, indeed, he seems to offer us more gospels. But, on the other hand, remember that your critic offers you less gospel when he is assiduously talking of more gospels. It is not easy to see the advantage of his judgment and dissections to the plain man or to the old-fashioned Sunday School. We remember that noble passage in Erasmus's Preface to his Greek Testament which Westcott and Hort transferred to the title-page of their Greek Testament. You will remember how he speaks of the Gospels as containing the lineaments of that sacred Mind and adds: "You would see Him less if you saw Him with your very eyes" (*Minus visurus sis, si coram oculis conspicias*). And apparently the editor of the Fourth Gospel agrees with the later editors of the Four Gospels, in thinking that much was super-

fluous which might be thought to be necessary. And certainly he would have endorsed Erasmus in the first sentence which Westcott and Hort quote from him, to the effect that "Most literature brings no small regret to the man who spends his time upon it." "You have enough," he says, and we most of us feel that something is to be said for him. Indeed, that must be enough which, as in the case of the Fourth Gospel, accomplishes the object of the writer to the reader, viz., the attainment of everlasting life. And what advantage, then, has the painful retrospect of research, or the diligence of him that grubs among papyri? If joy lies that way, it must be, one would think, the joy of the very few, and not the greater happiness of the larger number.

But here we are checked in our thought, and part company with the editor of the Fourth Gospel. From this point of view a whole gospel is not necessary; one verse might suffice for one person. In the same way a single visit to Christ might suffice for the

making of an apostle—did suffice in one well-known case. Such an experience might make a man say, as Myers makes John the Baptist say, "I carry Jesus with me till I die!" But no one who had known the Lord that way would be satisfied with his flying visit. He would say, "Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?" and come to spend the day, in order that the hour might be made perfect. He would say, "Not a brief glance I beg, a passing word." And the real judgment of the critic will be whether he takes us in the end to the Christ and leaves us there. If, then, the Christ of the first days is a clearer, lovelier Christ than we know, or than the one we put in stained glass windows, the going back to Him will be the highest wisdom.

When we ask a similar question concerning the primitive Church, we are in a similar difficulty. The Church, like the gospel, is one of the ways to the Christ. When we lay our hands upon the Church history, however stained and defaced the record may be, and, at first sight, negative to faith, there is a resulting

conviction that here you have the *gesta Christi*. And the importance of this consideration will be evident to any one who compares the Christian religion with the most active and aggressive of its rivals. Take, for example, the religion of Mithras, whose importance, as a rival of Christianity, all students are coming to recognise. It is not merely that Mithraism is dead, but there are no *gesta Mithræ;* there never were any. I admit that there is much that is repellent about the history of the Church. A fellow-student once said to me that he regarded the Church history as the greatest argument against Christianity. And we are certainly not going to be satisfied without some archæological restoration of the primitive fabric. If we regard the Church as a kind of gospel, it must, like the gospel, be capable of presentation in its primitive simplicity. A mediæval text will not do. The fact is the work of the archæologist is more needful for the restoration of the lines of the original Church than it is for either the lineaments

of the Christ or the text of the gospel; for in the latter, at any rate, whatever be the state of the text, we can still say with the writer to the Hebrews, "We see Jesus," but in the life of the Church there are whole periods where it is one of the commonest experiences to have to say, "He may be risen, but He is certainly not here."

It is, then, a peculiarly evangelical task to join hands with the critic and the archæologist in restoring the lines of the first confession and retracing the portraits of the first confessors. And we shall often find ourselves as the result of the investigation falling into comparisons made in Shakesperian language, and saying, "Look on this picture—and on that!" And provided the comparisons are made without over-exaggeration, and we do not make their heaven too much higher than ours, nor contrast too sombrely this mournful gloom with that celestial light, we may obtain lasting advantage from the investigation. Only we must not go back to smaller views, as to a geocentric cos-

mology, or an unnatural psychology, or a too lurid eschatology, but simply in order to know, and to compare, and, if you please, to pick up any treasures that the Church may have dropped *en route*.

Dean Stanley records somewhere an impression made upon him by the descriptions of the primitive Church in the Book of Acts, where we are told that "they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart!" He dwells upon this passage, not in order to get the Eucharist into it, but to deduce the primitive Christians' joy out of it. He expounds the two Greek words used, regarding them as characteristic of the Christian experience, ἀγαλλίασις and ἀφελότης. The second of the two words lent itself readily to comment, as being the word describing the state of a field out of which all the stones have been gathered. Any one who knows Syria, of which the Easterns say that the devil passed over it with a bag full of stones and a hole in the bottom of the bag, will appreciate the word with Dean

Stanley. But is it true that the result of investigation is to take us back to such an exulting people and to such a well-tilled land? A few moments spent on the subject of the newer knowledge of the elder Church may be profitably employed. My experience has been cast in a time when a stream of surprising biblical discoveries has been current. When I began my biblical and patristic studies almost the first thing that fell across my path was the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." It was a startling document. Westcott said of it that he "could have cried to find how different the early Church was from what he had imagined it to be!" Not long after I was myself privileged to discover the lost "Apology of Aristides the Athenian Philosopher," a document which was so altogether altruistic in its ethic, and disclosed a people so utterly happy in the faith into which they had been brought, that one might have blushed to find the difference between their spiritual temper and our own. Westcott's dissatisfaction was with the outside

of the ancient Church, ours with the inside of the modern Church. The Teaching of the Twelve has, however, a sturdy ethic of its own, though it is clearly the ethic of a lower civilisation than ours. But it is a document that is fatal to Catholic claims, that knows nothing, or next to nothing, of Catholic orders or Catholic ritual. Its Eucharist is certainly not the mediæval or modern bread-god, nor its Communion the modern fasting Communion. Here is matter enough for deploring, for those who wish to deplore. But turn now, for a moment, to the "Apology of Aristides," and read the description of Christian ethics in the early part of the second century, and see how it tallies with the description given in the Acts which Dean Stanley so much admired. Project yourself into the atmosphere of Aristides and his friends, and see if "the heaven's breath" does not "smell wooingly here!" How will this do for a description of Christian virtue?

"They abstain from all impurity, in the hope of the recompense that is to come in

another world. As for their servants or handmaids, or their children, if they have any, they persuade them to become Christians for the love they have towards them : and when they have become so, they call them without distinction brethren. They do not worship strange gods : and they walk in all humility and kindness, and falsehood is not found among them, and they love one another. From the widows they do not turn away their countenance : they rescue the orphan from him who does him violence : he who has gives to him who has not, without grudging. When they see the stranger they bring him to their dwellings and rejoice over him as over a true brother ; for they do not call brothers those who are after the flesh, but those who are in the spirit and in God : but when one of their poor passes away from the world, and any of them sees him, then he provides for his burial according to his ability ; and if they hear that any of their number is imprisoned or oppressed for the name of their Messiah, all of them provide for his need, and

if it is possible that he may be delivered, they deliver him. And if there is among them a man that is poor and needy, and if they have not an abundance of necessaries, they fast two or three days that they may supply the needy with the necessary food. They observe scrupulously the commandment of their Messiah: they live honestly and soberly, as the Lord their God commanded them; every morning and all hours on account of the goodnesses of God toward them they praise and laud Him, and over their food and their drink they render Him thanks. And if any righteous person of their number passes away from this world they rejoice and give thanks to God, and they follow his body, as though he were moving from one place to another. And when a child is born to any of them, they praise God, and if again it chance to die in its infancy, they praise God mightily, as for one who has passed through the world without sins. And if, again, they see that one of their number has died in his iniquity or in his sins, over this one they weep bitterly

and sigh, as over one that is about to go to punishment. Such is the law of the Christians and such their conduct."

Now, it is quite clear that if we were by any means projected back into the religious atmosphere described by Aristides, we should not find ourselves amongst a party of South Sea savages. Or if they were to come down to us, we should not be able to regard them as a group of undesirable aliens. On the contrary, we should either claim them as our very brethren, or if that seemed too great an audacity for persons so slack in charity and so feeble in illumination as ourselves, we should say of them, individually and collectively, "O cum talis sis, utinam noster esses." There can be no doubt that this apologetic picture corresponds very closely to the "gladness and singleness of heart" which attracted Dean Stanley. These people must be of the same class as those who are addressed in the epistle of Barnabas as *τέκνα εὐφροσύνης*, God's gladsome bairns. But they are not simply a group of

ecstatics. They have taken forward steps in religion, and are clearly progressives. For instance, they mark the abandonment of the old Jewish principle of hereditary religion. There is not a trace of "We are Abraham's children." Children are *persuaded* to become Christians. Yet the writer is sure that it is all right with children who die young. The magic of baptism is absent (I do not say that baptism is absent). They must have taken somewhere a forward step in declining the fiction of child membership and in insisting on the sincerity of man and woman membership. "For the love that they have to them, they persuade them to become Christians." Where persuasion is, there is multiplication and extension; where it is not or where the result of it is assumed, there is spiritual decline and disintegration. Consider, too, their extraordinary solidarity. We remember how the French, who started with a formula of liberty, equality, and fraternity, have begun to change the formula by the substitution of "solidarity"

for "fraternity." The latter word seems to them to be too individualistic and to express imperfectly the unity of the human race, and the ideals which spring from the thought of that unity. The early Church had both fraternity and solidarity—fraternity in the highest sense; for they do not call those brethren who are after the flesh, but those who are in the spirit and in God. They call them without distinction brethren! The same thing comes out in the matter of solidarity—"He who has gives to him who has not without grudging." Examine also their treatment of the stranger, the regulations for the burial of the dead, the deliverance of those who are imprisoned for the sake of the Messiah. These are features of genuine solidarity: many of the customs referred to persist, or reappear in the great mediæval guilds, which are really Churches *in petto*. How contagious must that happiness of theirs have been, when it even prescribed laws to Death, that he should not cast a shade upon a Christian burial,

"They rejoice greatly; they follow his corpse as if it were the removal of an emigrant that they were celebrating!" This feature of early Christian life is the more remarkable because it is just at this point of contact with Death that the human race is most conservative, and each generation insists upon being the model to the next. But you cannot find any trace of black or sordid raiment amongst the Christians whom we are considering. They rejoice over the departed: they rejoice with the departed: only one exception is made, the case of the wilfully impenitent. Few things will show more clearly than this case of "gladness and singleness of heart" what the early Church was like, and what the later Church became. My discovery, if I may say so, is greater than Tischendorf's on the same holy mountain. For while his upset the traditional text, mine upsets the traditional practice. One ethical variant is worth fifty biblical emendations. A modern critic—I think it was the late Dr. Salmon—said of the changes in the organisation

of the early Church, and the transition from the original Presbyteral government to the later Episcopal rule, that the Church of the second century passed into a tunnel. We saw it enter and we saw it emerge, but the evidence of what went on between the two known historical points is obscure. What Dr. Salmon says of the organisation of the early Church we say of their experience—it passed through a tunnel. But Dr. Salmon could not say, and it was hardly proper for him to say of the mere outwardness of the Church, whether the tunnel took them from a more favoured region into the contrary, or whether conversely they passed into clearer lights and larger liberties. In the matter of experience, however, we can speak with some confidence; they passed from Italy in sunshine into Switzerland in shade or in snow: and with some exceptions they have remained on the colder and darker side of the range of mountains through which they have passed. And if this be so, it is a lawful feature of the return to the Christ and to the Scriptures

and the Church to desire that we may get back again into primitive heart-happiness. Or if some one shall object to our pictures as being over-coloured, then it must be our most gracious mark that we desire to get forward into real heart-happiness, for it will be as true of us as it was of Paul and his Philippian friends, that we are the circumcision (*i.e.*, the real people) who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

When Goldsmith described his ideal parson, he drew the climax of his qualification in the fact that he "allured to brighter worlds and led the way." As the passage is no clerical preserve, but the description of all faithful souls, I will repeat a line or two more of it :—

> "And as a bird each fond endearment tries,
> To lure her new-fledged offspring to the skies,
> He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
> Allured to brighter worlds and led the way."

It does not need any recovery of ancient documents to tell us that we ought to be more alluring than we are. All around is a

new-fledged offspring, which has not yet found its wings or its songs. They can only flutter, they do but twitter. It is a high calling to be alluring in Christ's stead, a wonderful calling. He can make every bird that He snares into a decoy, every fish that He catches into a bait, or into a fisherman, every captive into a loyal soldier. All genuine Christian experience is alluring. The man who escapes the horrible pit and sings his new song on the margin of the miry clay is alluring. The man who stands firm where Christ has set him sentry is alluring: a wreath of heaven's laurel is already materialising over his head. The man who breasts Jordan's waves and shouts on the banks of deliverance is alluring: let me die the death of the righteous, let my last end be like his. But it is not only the man strenuous in action or strong in death that is winsome. Anywhere, everywhere, the soul made happy in Christ's love is alluring.

You remember that famous passage in the "Grace Abounding" where John Bunyan tells

how his spirit was quickened by hearing some poor women who sat in the sun and told their experiences. "Methought they spake as if joy did make them speak!" Good gospel that, with good illustration of gospel in the sunshine where they were sitting. But it would be equally good gospel if they had sat in the shade, and joy had made them speak. The fact is that it is at this point that we are certain to become powerful preachers. There is always some one overhearing our happiness. The typical illustration in the Scripture is well known, Paul and Silas in prison, in the inner prison, in the stocks, at midnight, with sore backs and glowing hearts, singing praises. As I heard some one once say, "we should hardly have got beyond a prayer-meeting." In that case the allurement would have been wanting, for the attraction was in the song, and it is song that makes song.

"What is this psalm from pitiable places,
Glad where the messengers of peace have trod?
Whose are these beautiful and holy faces,
Lit with their loving and aflame with God?"

From all of which it appears that the attraction of the Christian religion does not consist in the internal harmony or splendour of its doctrines (much less of its rites or buildings), but in the experience of its worshippers. There is a chain of Catholic joy, as well as a transmission of Catholic doctrine. Each nightingale teaches the next its note. It is as necessary to be sound in the happiness of the faith as it is to be sound in the faith. To be happy in God and in God's will is the highest orthodoxy that His creatures are capable of: and we shall certainly allure to brighter worlds when we ourselves live in them. From such an inward spring may we preach and teach and live, and by it fulfil the description given in one of the apocryphal books of the service of those who become "friends of God and prophets," that "in the time of their visitation they shall shine, and run to and fro like sparks among the stubble."

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

CHAPTER VII

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE Christian Church has a calendar of festivals that are to be observed throughout the course of each year; and although some branches of the Church have longer and more highly evolved calendars than others, it will probably be correct to say that every Church has something in the nature of a calendar. The most extended calendar is that of the Roman Church, followed closely by those of the Greek and other Oriental Churches, calendars which contain, not only festivals commemorative of the leading events in the life of Christ and the fortunes of His people, but which also include many fictitious memorials

designed (as I have elsewhere shown) to incorporate the cult of pagan deities and heroes, often under the thinnest of disguises.

If the Roman calendar is the most highly evolved, we may place at the opposite scale the calendar of the Society of Friends, which is limited to the selection of a particular week in the month of May for the purposes of an Annual Meeting; and between these two extremes we may group the various calendars of the individual Churches. Now, it will readily be seen that all the Churches which keep a series of Christian festivals throughout the year do so with the intention, as far as possible, of co-ordinating those festivals in a proper sequence. They do this almost of necessity, for is not the calendar intended to serve as a mirror of the Life of Christ, reduced to one *Annus Mirabilis*, one acceptable year of the Lord? In that case history will enforce sequence, and there will be a reason why certain festivals occur in a certain order.

But then, this order will be not merely

natural, as reflecting historical events, but it will endeavour to express spiritual truth in the language of history, and unless it did so the Christian year would lose much of its beauty and meaning. It is something more than history which tells us that Good Friday does not fall in Easter week ; it is spiritual necessity which places Good Friday and Easter in a certain order, for, as the Apostle says, "if we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with Him" ; or, as the Salvation Army lassie said when she was telling her experience, "I had to learn that Good Friday came before Easter Day." There is, then, a sequence and co-ordination observable in the festivals of the Church, which is especially patent in the case of a pair of closely related festivals whose nexus is not merely natural but spiritual. I suppose every one will recognise this in the case which I have brought forward, because Good Friday and Easter are hardly two separate festivals at all ; but the case is not so simple nor the fact so readily observed in

the case of another pair of festivals to which we must now draw attention. I mean the Ascension of Christ and the Descent of the Holy Ghost. One does not instinctively connect Ascensiontide and Whitsuntide together ; the historical links are obscure and the spiritual links are not obvious, except to those who search for them. There is a great difference in kind between the two festivals of Ascension Day and Whitsunday. The former is a festival of heaven, the latter belongs entirely to the experience of the Church on earth. If we consider the first Ascension record, we can only say it is so brief as hardly to be a record at all. It amounts to this, that Jesus blessed His disciples and disappeared. They had no triumph, no rapture, no exultation ; only there was a perplexity in the minds of disciples who were too ignorant as yet to appreciate what had happened and yet wise enough, in view of what they did know, not to relapse into unbelief or its companion, grief, over what they were not able to comprehend. The Ascension, then, was a

festival of heaven; it was there that the bells were ringing, not in the most heavenward-reaching of our towers; it was there that they unloosed the bars of massy light and let the King of Glory in; it was the angelic company that had the rapture, who had followed Him all His life through—

> "Oft wondering where and how at last
> The mystic scene would end.
> * * * * *
> They brought His chariot from above
> To bear Him to His throne,
> Spread their triumphant wings and cried,
> 'The glorious work is done!'"

In a word, they crowned Him Lord of all; but of the fact of the coronation, in any sense that should provoke a festival record, there does not seem to have been a suspicion in the minds of the primitive believers. And it was not until ten days afterward that the news of heaven became the property of earth, and the saints below began to sing in concert with those that were above and to say that "God has

made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ," "He is by the right hand of God exalted, He has received of the Father the promise of the Spirit," which we now experience. They had linked together the two festivals and made the conjunction of heavenly and terrestrial bliss. It is, therefore, quite clear that these two festivals are a co-ordinated sequence. The Pentecost becomes intelligible when it is seen to be a festival of the exalted and glorified Christ. So much having been said with regard to the calendar and its external apparatus for the illustration of spiritual things, let us try to get at the spiritual things themselves. For at its best the calendar is only a help, and a help that easily passes over into a hindrance if we limit ourselves too much to days and times. When, for example, we are reading George Herbert's verses on Whitsunday and find him pleading for the restoration of this day to its ancient and miraculous right, we are obliged to stop and ask ourselves whether the crowning Pentecostal experience can really be

limited to a particular calculated and appointed day. We may agree in the main with the poet's desire :—

> "Lord, though we change, Thou art the same,
> The same dear God of Love and Light;
> Restore this day, for Thy most holy name,
> Unto his ancient and miraculous right";

but when we have affirmed the unchangeableness of God in His power and grace and in His willingness to fill His people with the sense of His presence, we must not take away from the thought by imposing upon it a calendar limitation. The experience of Pentecost is not marked by any other chronology than that of obedience and faith; and these will make a Pentecost anywhere and at any time. Perhaps we shall see this more clearly if we turn to the account of the great and notable day in the Acts of the Apostles; when we do so we find that the stress is laid on time, place, and concord: a day fully come, a place conformed to the habit of an expectant

people, and a united spirit of faith. Now, suppose we ask the question, Which of these is the most important, in which quarter did the magic lie, from whence did the grace proceed? From the time? Not necessarily, for the phenomenon repeated itself many times. From the place? No, for it occurred outside Jerusalem, however much it began in and from Jerusalem. From the concord? Certainly this is the mark of every such outpouring and visitation; it is the result of an understanding between God and man and between one man and his brethren. Thus we arrive at the underlying truth that *the day of Pentecost was not a day, but an agreement.*

We are now far away from the calendar and well on the road towards the heavenly things themselves.

And now let us see some of the features which made this visitation of God so great and notable; let us come to the experience itself.

We will speak of it in two of its results: first, as being an equipment in personality;

second, as being the reception of the apostolic and Christian credentials.

Now, with regard to personality, may we not say that the Holy Spirit is the missing factor in our personality, and that without it we cannot be altogether ourselves, as God wants us to be? For we notice that an abiding gift means an abiding change in the person to whom the gift is made; and this is an abiding Gift: it is said that "He shall abide with you for ever," and "we will come unto Him and make our abode with Him." So, then, if the Holy Spirit is a Divine Abiding, the result of the gift will be found in personal equipment and change. The fact being, as we have stated, that we cannot be completely ourselves apart from the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, we are obliged to recognise that He operates as transforming grace in the conversion and in the sanctification of the souls of men, and to this all the saints bear witness. To keep the matter simple, and to keep it also forcible, we will call for a few testimonies as to what the work of the

Holy Spirit in the transformation of personality is like. Here is one, to begin with, of a very simple character :—

"It was in November, 1823, but what day of the month I do not know. I remember this, that everything looked new to me—the people, the fields, the cattle, the trees. I was like a new man in a new world. I spent the greater part of my time in praising the Lord. I could say with Isaiah, 'O Lord, I will praise Thee, for though Thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away and Thou comfortedst me' ; or like David, 'The Lord hath brought me up out of a horrible pit of mire and clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings, and hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise to my God.' I was a new man altogether. I told all that I met what the Lord had done for my soul. I have heard some say that they have had hard work to get away from their companions, but I sought mine out, and had hard work to tell them what the Lord had done for me. Some said I was mad, and others

that they should get me back again next pay-day. But, praise the Lord! it is now more than forty years, and they have not got me yet. They said I was a *mad*-man, but they meant I was a *glad*-man, and, Glory be to God! I have been glad ever since."

Such was the striking experience of that apostolic man Billy Bray, the Cornish miner, at whose feet we have often sat in the spirit; a position which has not needed any apologetic explanation in modern times, since Professor James, of Harvard, has re-discovered Billy and put him in his gallery of Varieties of Religious Experience. Observe the note of this testimony, the conscious sense of personal renewal by the Holy Spitit. Here is another well-known example from another quarter, belonging to a somewhat more advanced experience, but inwardly parallel to the one we have just quoted. George Fox tells us of a certain wonderful visitation of heavenly life that he experienced, as follows :—

"Now was I come up in Spirit, through the

flaming sword, into the paradise of God. All things were new, and all the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter. I knew nothing but pureness, innocence, and righteousness ; so that I was come up to the state of Adam, which he was in before he fell."

Clearly here is another new man talking ; his symbols are mystical, but there is no doubt in his mind, or in ours, that he has undergone a transformation. We may not quite understand about the flaming sword, but since we find the man carving it upon his seal, and mentioning this particular seal in his will, there can be no doubt of the importance of the experience to him. It had made him other than he was and more than he had been. It was, as his subsequent life showed, an apostolic equipment, a personal renewal.

And here is another testimony equally decided, and in many ways quite similar to the preceding. Madame Guyon tells us of a certain remarkable spiritual experience of hers as follows :—

"My heart was quite changed; God was there; from that moment He had given me an experience of His presence in my soul—not merely as an object intellectually perceived, but as a thing really possessed after the sweetest manner. I experienced those words in the Canticles, 'Thy name is as precious ointment poured forth: thereforth do the virgins love Thee.' For I felt in my soul an unction which healed in a moment all my wounds. I slept not all that night, because Thy Love, O my God, flowed in me like delicious oil, and burned like a fire that was going to destroy all that was left of self in an instant. I was all of a sudden so altered that I was hardly to be known either by myself or by others. I found no more those troublesome faults, or that reluctance to duty which formerly characterised me. They all disappeared, as being consumed like chaff in a great fire."

Here we have again the same testimony to personal renewal and expansion and completion through the indwelling of the blessed Spirit;

and the two or three witnesses coming from such opposite points of view to the same conclusion may be a sufficient establishment of the reality of the work of which they speak.

Now let us think of the way in which this visitation of the Holy Ghost furnishes the credentials for Divine service. St. Ephraem the Syrian tells us that the children of Israel believed Moses when he came down from the mountain because the rays of light from his face furnished a testimony to the truth of his word! It was necessary that Moses should have credentials, for "whereby shall it be known that Thou hast sent me?" the man might ask. So Moses came down from the mountain, supported, not by the conventional two or three witnesses who shall confirm his word, but by two or three thousand convincing and converting sunbeams, declaring without fear of contradiction that "this man is come to you with a message from your Lord." The right preaching is that in which something about the man commends the message. And we may say, therefore,

that it is of the nature of a true Pentecostal experience to produce *a congruity between the message and the messenger*. Now certainly this was the case with our Lord Himself. The people who heard Him were blessed before ever he opened His mouth and said, "Blessed are ye." They were rested before ever He said, "I will give you rest." The Gospel was Christ even more than it was the word of Christ; and there was a perfect congruity between the Christ-Person and the Christ-word. And this being his experience, we may be sure that something like it appears in the experiences of the apostolic men and women, the earlier and later saints, and believers generally. They have a gospel which has to be proclaimed, but it has also to be commended; it has to be announced, but it has also to be adorned. The kingdom of heaven is to be spoken of, but it must be within those who speak: to have it around us or among us will not suffice, when He said it was to be within us. The Pentecostal congruity between the Messenger and the

Message arises from this inward experience, this reign of God in the heart and conscience. And it is this visitation which puts the beauty of the Lord upon His willing people, and when it is there the question is sure to be asked concerning those who are in the lesser apocalypse which is asked of the triumphant saints in the larger vision: "What are these, and whence came they?" And the Holy Ghost will fall on those who hear the word, when it has first fallen upon those who speak the word. It will make them able where they have before been weak; it saves them from impotence, reluctance, and disability. It takes the words, "I can't" out of the vocabulary, and writes over the vacant space instead, "I can do all things through an indwelling and strengthening Christ." Negatively also it removes from the life those wayward desires which choke the word, impede the life, and postpone the kingdom. Thus the visitation of the Holy Ghost is only another way of describing the effect which Christ has upon willing and surrendered

souls : the visitation is, in fact, the vision. It instructs us to follow after Him, and to become fishers of men. It does in continuance what a single visit or interview used to do in the days of His flesh. It is not a different kind of grace from that which came to the woman of Samaria, when a single talk with One who told her all that ever she did made her an evangelist and (may we not say ?) an apostle.

And to her also He spoke of an inward fountain which should spring up into an eternal life ; and it would be difficult to describe Pentecost and its experience in more exact terms. The fact is that the Samaritans of her day believed her in precisely the same way as, at a later date, they believed the word of the apostles themselves when they came down to them with the freshness and glory of the Upper Chamber, and brought great joy with them. In the one case they believed a shaded one that had abruptly turned into a shining one ; in the other they received and

believed the word of a company of shining ones. But if Churches go back in search of apostolic foundations, Samaria will go back farther than St. Peter or St. John. But in any case the credentials were the same, the joy of the Holy Ghost, the love of God shed abroad in the heart.

Perhaps it will be thought that we are unduly restricting the credentials in thus emphasising the necessity and importance of the Pentecostal experience. Was there no creed promulgated on that elect day, nothing which should distinguish between sheep and goats, between orthodox and unorthodox ; no book of rules nor handbook of discipline, no articles of religion nor of catholicity in religion ? Apparently none of these things belongs in the Pentecostal connection. As far as orthodoxy goes, they were orthodox already, Thomas as orthodox as John, however long it may have taken him to get there. Pentecost adds nothing to the equipment of doctrines : it adds everything to the equipment of the teachers. The

equipment of doctrine stands where it did. It is expressed in words like these out of the past of the learners: "Lord, I believe," "Thou art the Christ," "He is really risen," "Thou knowest all things," and the like. What, then, is the real increment? A little more faith in the Lord, and a great deal more of resulting experience; a sense of personal union with Him and of personal interest in His grace and His promises; a conviction that the promise is to us which will enable us presently to say to some one else that "the promise is to you"; a conviction for holiness which will result presently in a confession of holiness, as the Spirit of Truth shall lead. But all of this is outside the region of dogmatic Christianity, which stands, after Pentecost, just where it did before, with one foundation of God laid, and every man diligently building thereon. The right way to understand the difference which the great Visitation made is to imagine what would have happened if they had gone on without it, if

they had not tarried in Jerusalem for the Divine equipment. They could have gone on without it ; they already were a Church ; their names were written both in earth and heaven ; they had a message to the world (exactly the same message substantially on either hypothesis, whether they preached as baptized or as unbaptized of the Spirit). So they might have made some progress. And perhaps it might not have been altogether unlike the experience of some modern Churches, where they do not preach upon the text, "The little one shall become a thousand," but where they discuss whether they are keeping up with the population and its normal growth. In that case Peter might have said to the first believers, "We are now a hundred and twenty in number, and Christ is risen ; perhaps by the end of the year we shall be a hundred and twenty-one." But what saith the Scripture ?— "The same day there were added to the church three thousand souls." That was the difference. The little one became a thousand under

their eyes, and they could see the mustard-seed grow and become a tree as they watched it. But it may be urged that although the bases of belief were fixed before Pentecost, and most of them long before, yet in regard to the particular doctrine of that special elect day there must have been some increment of knowledge and of teaching. Or are we to say that the experience of the Day of Pentecost involves no more than a personal application of truths already believed, as though the seal and the wax had long been in the neighbourhood of each other, but now the wax was softened and the seal applied?

I do not care to define too closely in such matters. To put the matter plainly for practical people, the Pentecostal gift is, to a large extent, one of the lapsed experiences of the Christian Church. Every believer ought to have the experience; only a few really have it, and confess it. For us, then, it is not a question how the first believers reached the blessing, but how may modern believers get back to it.

As far as we are concerned, the gift and grace of which we speak lies in the Spiritual Lost Property Office. And if that is so, I say without hesitation that a minute description of the lost property is not necessary to the establishment of a claim. The fact that you are seeking something which you have lost is presumptive evidence in your favour.

My wife once lost her gold watch in London, and I went to Scotland Yard in quest of it. They asked me, "What sort of a watch was it?" I said, "A gold watch with an inscription inside the case." "What was the inscription?" That it "was given to Helen Balkwill on the occasion of her marriage by the ladies of the Temperance Association of Plymouth, Stonehouse, and Devonport." The official said, "You are wrong." I should have said, "Of the Three Towns." But he handed over the watch. My identification was sufficient, even if it was not exact.

And while we value exactness in spiritual things, wherever it can be obtained by creatures

as normally inexact as ourselves, we need not think that it all turns on an exact definition. The theology of the experience is not absolutely necessary to the experience. What is necessary is that we should hunger and thirst after righteousness. What is certain is that if we do so hunger we shall be sated.

AARON'S BLESSING

CHAPTER VIII

AARON'S BLESSING

WE began this little volume of addresses with a talk on the breastplate of Aaron; we will conclude it with a few thoughts on the high-priestly benediction. You will find it recorded in the sixth chapter of Numbers, where it runs as follows:—

"On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them:

The Lord bless thee and keep thee:

The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

And so shall they put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them."

The Scriptures are rich, characteristically rich, uniquely rich, in the matter of doxologies and of benedictions; if only these two forms of worship, the exercise of the soul respectively towards God and man, were to be collected, what a lovely little book would be made by the process of selection! what mountain tops of dogma would be reached, what Pisgah sights of Christian experience would be rolled out before our eyes and before our feet—that is to say, before our faith—so that we might acknowledge the grace and possess the land, the good land which the Lord our God giveth us! All that has ever been said of the Divine Nature would be in the book, for the doxologies and the benedictions use the same theological language. If one says "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty," the other responds with "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with thy spirit," so that the Benediction is itself a creed, and a creed which is a life, and a life which is love.

No stronger statements, no deeper insights into the full meaning of salvation, can ever be obtained than those which fall upon our ears when the Lord or His messengers are set to bless the people. And this is not only true of the New Testament, it occurs and prevails throughout the Old ; if the degree varies, the benediction is the same in kind : the same grace and the same glory from the same Lord, who is rich unto all that call upon Him in truth, especially when they call upon Him for others.

Now, the benediction of which we are speaking, the one in the Book of Numbers, will be found located in the midst of matter of all degrees of spiritual value ; so that, if we were reading continuously, we should stumble upon it unexpectedly, and pass away from it, when we had read it, much as we would pass from an oasis into a desert. For it is preceded, in the biblical narration, by the rules for the manufacture and the administration of "cursing water," of which one can only say that it

is a leaf out of an old magic-book, and that its spiritual value is absolutely nil. In the same connection we have the law by which the Nazarite separates himself from wine and strong drink ; and while, perhaps, we shall have to admit that the Nazarite went into the region of ethical extravagance in refusing to touch even the seeds of the grape, we can hardly say that Nazarite vows are out of date, or that they have lost their spiritual value. So the benediction is preceded by matter that cannot be uniformly classified when we are estimating spiritual truth or utility. And we notice, further, that it is followed by the story of the offering of silver dishes and golden spoons by the princes of the congregation, an account which instinctively provokes a criticism that such benefactions are not always as holy as they look, for even in our own day we have many opportunities of observing how money is made irreligiously and then bestowed religiously ; how the stock-gambler adorns the altar and the distiller builds the cathedral, and

how both give as the world giveth, including, amongst other features of generosity, the determination to give no more if the gift should not be allowed to act as an ethical anodyne. And if such gifts, at least in our own day, represent a varying spiritual value from zero upwards, there is also a critical question (into which we cannot go here) as to how such a plate-audit as is here described in the Pentateuch, expressed in troy-weights of the sanctuary, can have taken place in the wilderness. But, doubt as we may about the setting of the benediction and the relative value in morals or in history of that in the midst of which it is found, we can have no doubt about the benediction itself. That, at all events, is pure gold, and if we do not find it possible to be enthusiastic over the surrounding matter, we may say that the Scriptures vindicate themselves by the suddenness of their enchanted changes, as Ruskin used to say of the Derbyshire dales.

From this form of blessing we learn that God makes his face to shine upon us, and it is

easy to infer that He does this either directly or by reflection. Nor will it be easy to decide in which of these two ways the illumination may come, whether from the immediate life and light of God or from the dwelling of God in some neighbour soul. For it is constantly happening in each of the two ways. To use the similitudes of the Holy Grail, we have first the case of Percival's sister who sees the vision, after long prayer, and fasting, and patience, in her own cell, upon whose white walls the Heavenly Vision descends, and the sweet Grail is seen—

"Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive."

That is the first form of the vision, according to which "God has a few of us" (and one is tempted to ask, "Why not many?") "whom He whispers in the ear." Or to get back to biblical language, "In all ages Wisdom enters into holy souls, and makes them friends of God and prophets." That is direct vision and immediate audition—the seeing for oneself of

which Job talked. But then, still on the line of the Holy Grail and its lessons, there are those who see through the eyes of the one that has seen, such as Percival and Galahad when the message comes to them that "the holy thing is here again among us, brother."

> "She shot the deathless passion in her eyes
> Through him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
> On him, and he believed in her belief."

That is the indirect vision; it leads on to direct vision later, but it begins, as Galahad confesses, with what "thy sister taught me first to see." This is a Scriptural method; it is in the Old Testament, in the form, "O taste and see how gracious the Lord is," and in the New Testament in the form, "That which our eyes have looked upon declare we unto you." Such being the distinction between the vision direct and the vision reflected, it seems clear that we must be prepared for either form of illumination, and be willing to learn fresh truths about God, either directly or by intermediaries. The

first of the two methods is the doctrine of immediate inspiration; it is individualist to the last degree, expresses itself in the first person singular and in the second person singular, and not at all in the third person plural. Its description is of the form contained in the words, "And the Lord said unto Moses, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne," or "The word of the Lord came to John the son of Zachariah *in the wilderness.*"

The second method of illumination consists in seeing God in other people and by other people. It is socialist in character, closely connected with the structure of the Church, by which the manifold wisdom of God is made known, even to principalities and powers, and it involves a willingness to receive, which is often a harder grace to obtain than that of giving. Its watchword might be, "They glorified God in me," or "The children of Israel saw the skin of the face of Moses that it shone"; or the same thought may be expressed in a stray testimony which has come down out

of the early Church to the effect that "thou hast seen thy brother, thou hast seen thy God!"

I have a conviction that it often pleases God to humble us by the means which He chooses to illuminate us. It is related of Jacob Behmen, the great German mystic, that the immediate cause of the revelation which changed his whole life was the reflection of a sunbeam upon him from a bit of glass or tin that was lying in the road. From that bit of tin he became illuminated and illuminating. William Law sat at his feet, and so, they say, did Hegel and ever so many more noble souls. All that, shall we say, from one little bit of tin? Well, that will serve for allegory. Suppose the bit of tin to be a human soul, the humblest of souls, humbler for its very vision, less because it has become more; how often does the Lord send us to school to such, that they may tell us the secrets of the Kingdom, and instruct us how we may more effectively lose ourselves and find Him! It pleases Him to perfect praise in a choir of babes and so to still the enemy and

the avenger; He sets the old to learn of the young, the rich of the poor, the scribe of the illiterate. It makes for solidarity, too, when maid-servants prophesy, and when old men and young men are able to exchange their dreams.

Now, if this be the case, then it follows that we must prepare ourselves in advance to learn great truths of unlikely people. This is a great grace, and almost all great souls have it. John Wesley, for example, was conspicuous therein. He went to the Moravian meeting to hear some one read Luther's Preface to the Romans, and the whole world is richer for his going. True, he went reluctantly, but he went; and a strange warmth at the heart was his benediction. I am afraid if he had lived in the present day he would have run the risk of putting himself under vows never to drink of an unauthorised spring! How many there are who make themselves and their world the poorer because they promise their guides never to attend a Nonconformist meeting, or, to speak more

generally, who refuse in advance to go where grace entices them. But I can hardly think that Wesley could have been permanently made into a man of such narrow outlook ; if he had been, he would never have had the world for his parish.

And if we are right that great truths are often to be learned of unlikely teachers, I believe it will be found that this is especially true in the region of the inward life, where our progress so often turns upon our losing sight of or inverting the scale of values which prevails in the world and in the Church. The doctrine of sanctification, for instance, is seldom learnt from those whom we should naturally elect to teach us. Madame Guyon learnt it, or one branch of it, from a beggar on a bridge, whom she saw once, if I remember rightly, and no more. In this region of the spiritual life, at all events, it pays to look down.

But we must return to our benediction ; and it would not be proper to pass away from the Old Testament presentation of it (it is, as we

have implied, neither old nor new, but simply eternal) without asking what becomes of the high priest who is, under the ancient theology, God's benedictional delegate. Must it not be that this delegated power to bless inheres in the Church and is the privilege of the believer, and that even if Aaron is caught away his office remains? It was said to Abraham, "I will bless thee and be thou a blessing." Is there any one of us that ought to be less richly endowed, either in reception or in transmission? Is not the priestly and intercessional man and woman with us yet? Do they not still put the name of the Lord on the children of Israel, and lift hands of prayer and say, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee"? And from some souls over some souls the fountain of intercession plays night and day. If we watch them at their work we shall soon learn some of their secrets; one is that they do not "ask in prayer that which others may not share," by which means prayer is continually retranslated into bene-

diction ; another is that they are always wishing for others more of the joy of the kingdom of heaven than they have themselves ; and a third is that they rejoice in the work of other of God's people as if it were their own. And, last of all, they are as skilled in saying, " Hast Thou not a blessing for this one ? " as in the necessary art of asking, " Hast Thou not a blessing for me, even for me ? " For those that are of such a spirit the fields are always white to the harvest ; they continually gather fruit unto life eternal.

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